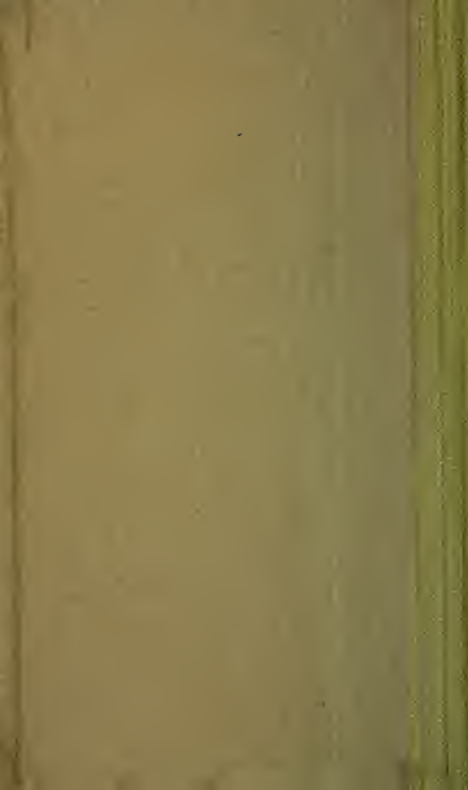


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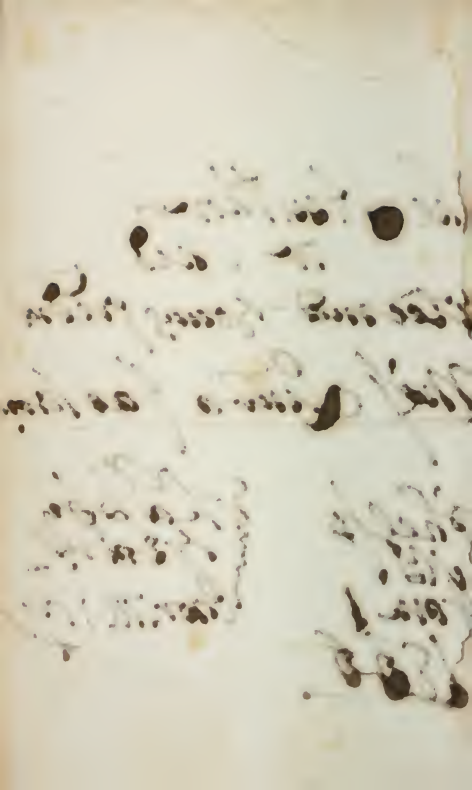
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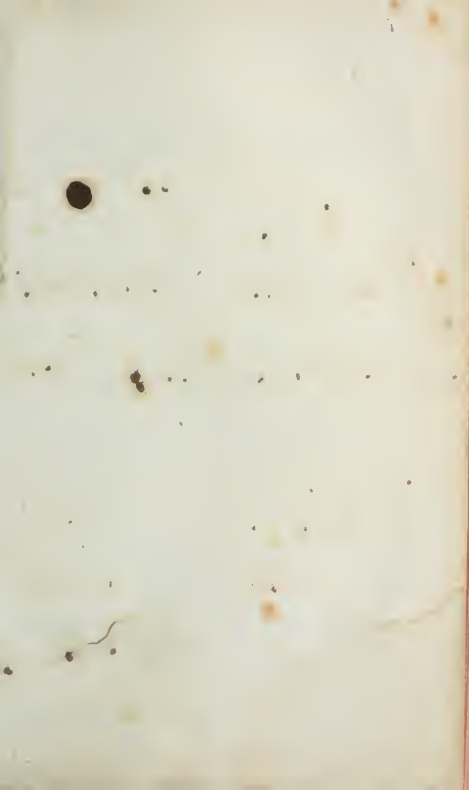
The Author
to his
esteemed young friend
Miss Linda Jackson

Shelfs
NY
from
1886

Happy
Years.
Cor. III: 17.

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A

CHRISTIAN GIFT;

OR,

PASTORAL LETTERS.

BY

Rev. F. De W. WARD, 1812-1891
O.C.T.

LATE MISSIONARY AT MADRAS, AND AUTHOR
OF "INDIA AND THE HINDOOS."

SECOND EDITION

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

Youth of my Beloved Flock,

SOME OF WHOM,

I am mercifully permitted to hope,

HAVE COMMENCED A CHRISTIAN LIFE ;

AND FOR WHOSE INSTRUCTION AND COUNSEL

they were originally designed and prepared,

These Letters

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR ;

With an earnest Prayer to Almighty God

that they may, in their present form,

BE ACCEPTABLE AND PROFITABLE TO THEM,

as well as to others

into whose hands they may fall.

GENESEO, N. Y.,
1852.



LETTER I.

Elements of a Complete Christian Character.

DEAR *Linda*—

I am much pleased to hear you ask, what it is to be a *complete Christian*? The question augurs well for your future career and prospects. Your results will very much correspond with your aims. In proportion to the elevation of your mark will be the probable height of your attainments. Let *perfection* be the object you desire and endeavor to secure, and though you reach not that faultless eminence, you will rise higher than would be possible

with a lower standard. Among the elements of a complete Christian character I would name as first,

I N T E L L I G E N C E .

By this feature is meant an acquaintance with the proofs upon which you rest your belief that there is a God, and that He is possessed of all adorable perfections; that the Bible is heaven-descended, containing "*truth, without mixture of error*;" a knowledge of the leading facts and doctrines contained in that blessed volume; with the reasons of the hope you entertain that you are a disciple of Christ and an heir of heaven. The *first two* will require that you read with care one or more of the excellent volumes of Paley—Watson—Erskine—Alexander—McIlvaine

—Nelson—Spring, and others of like excellence, with which our age abounds. In order to the *third* you must diligently study the Sacred Scriptures, and in connection therewith, a systematic treatise on Christian Theology; while the *last* demands that you observe and reflect upon your prevailing thoughts and deportment, bringing them into close and faithful contact with the revealed tests of a truly converted heart.

Do not shrink from the undertaking as requiring more time and patience than you have at command. It is not expected that all this will be done *at once*, neither is it recommended that you aim at becoming a profound theologian and acute Biblical critic, versed in the abstruse speculations and techni-

cal distinctions of the schools. These pursuits must, of necessity, be confined to the *few* who have the time and opportunity for such far reaching engagements. But it is urged, most earnestly, that you acquire such a knowledge of the plentiful arguments in defense of the being of a God and the Divine authorship of the Bible as may enable you to tell the Atheist and the Infidel why you *cannot* agree with them, that all that we behold is the fortuitous accumulation of atoms existing from eternity, and that the Scriptures are a "cunningly devised fable;" as may enable you to state and defend the articles of faith peculiar to the church of which you are a member, being careful that these are based upon the Bible; and that you be ready at all

times to "give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Many Christians of our times are sadly deficient in this feature of *intelligence*, seeming to think that it is a matter of small moment what is the condition of the *mind*, if the *heart* is only right.

It cannot be denied that if the two must be brought into contrast a truly pious heart is more desirable than a highly cultivated mind. But between them there is no necessary collision. This is so far from being the case that it is *truth* in the *mind* that is best calculated to awaken right *emotions* in the soul, the judgment being the direct avenue to the affections. Every duty implies an intelligent view of corresponding truth. *Repentance* supposes a correct view of

sin; *faith* is connected with a knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ; *obedience*, with an apprehension of the great principles of the divine law; *love*, with distinct views of the character of God; *submission*, with a perception of the excellence of the divine government; and *prayer*, with a recognition of our dependence. However it be with other religions, ignorance is not the mother of Christian piety : so far from it, the glory of the gospel is, that it demands an intelligent mind, requiring its disciples to *think aright* in order to *feel aright*. Be devout and heartfelt in your attachment to Christ as was the noble lady of old who said to her persecutors, "though I cannot *argue* for my Savior I can *burn* for him," yet be at the same time, a thoughtful student of the works

and ways and word of God, having clear and well defined views of what you believe and profess.

HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS

is a second trait in the character we are considering. “*They mind earthly things,*” says an apostle respecting the predominant taste and pursuits of the men of the world. With you, as a Christian, it ought to be altogether different. Your treasure being in heaven, there should your heart be, and there *will it be just in proportion to the clearness of your hope that you have been “born again.”* In order to this most necessary attainment, be much in the habit of contemplating sacred themes, those especially which lie nearest to the cross. Study diligently the

Bible, especially the Psalms of David and the Gospel of the Savior. Be often and long in your closet, communing with your God alone, and with all freedom of thought and expression. Keep near at hand, and read daily portions from such works as "Baxter's Saints Rest," Romaine's Life, Walk and Triumph of Faith," "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," "Flavel's Touchstone," "Taylor's Holy Living and Dying," "Scougal's Life of God in the soul of man," "Law's Serious Call," and "Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ." Above all *meditate much upon heaven*. With the Bible as your telescope, survey its glories—bring them near and view them earnestly and in detail; the presence of God, the throne of the Lamb, perfect

love, purity, knowledge and bliss; contrast these with all that earth can offer; say to yourself "heaven is *mine*, for me it has been purchased with a price most precious—soon I am to inhabit it—and shall I, can I, waste all my thought and interest upon what is passing rapidly away, and which, could it remain, would no more supply my wants than the sand of the desert can satisfy the cravings of hunger? Such means habitually and prayerfully employed will aid your growth in grace—will help you to detach yourself from objects soliciting your daily attention—and urge you towards that spiritual mindedness which is "life and peace."



CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

is a third feature in a perfect Christian character. There is that within the soul which, though it do not render unnecessary a revelation of the Divine will, in a measure takes its place when the Bible is not possessed, or attests its claims when they are presented to the mind. To this innate teacher we give the name of *conscience*. You recognise its existence in your own bosom, nor are you ignorant of its mode of instruction. Though unseen and unheard, there passes not a day in which its presence is not recognised and its power felt. Be careful to pay due attention to its admonitions and enforcements. I do not say that what conscience directs is of course and under all circumstances right and to be regarded. This

has proved a weapon of fatal harm in the hand of infidelity, especially upon the minds of the young and inconsiderate. The Bible must give light and authority to conscience, else it will be a false and dangerous guide. But if that book be silent respecting any question of duty calling for immediate attention, (and it is a volume of *principles* rather than minute enactments,) and if friendly and judicious counselors are divided in opinion, then you are left to prayer and conscience. Under such circumstances listen to its voice—be awake to its suggestions—with an apostle, “exercise yourself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man”—ever attentive to what this monitor “dictates *to be done*, or warns you *not to do*.”

HEROISM

is a fourth element in a completely Christian character. You have taken your position intelligently and conscientiously. With a deliberate judgment that on the side of Christ are truth, and right, and safety, you have joined yourself to the company of His disciples. The act was wholly voluntary. The vow of allegiance was publicly made, and was sealed by a participation in the sacramental service. Nothing was wanting to increase its importance or deepen its solemnity. You see no reason to repent of that act—to retrace your steps—to recall your vow. Your mind and heart remain where they were on that memorable day. Be then a bold, *decided* Christian. Remember how antagonistic are the character and claims

of him to whom you once yielded subjection, and those of the gentle, holy Jesus, your present Master. In the early days of the Church many a disciple, with your vows and name, was called upon to confess Christ in the amphitheatre, the dungeon, on the cross, and at the stake. They *rejoiced*, too, that unto them it was given, not only to believe in Him, but also to *suffer* for Him. In the sovereignty of Divine mercy, you are not called to a like manifestation of your attachment to the religion of Jesus; but occasions even now are ever offering for an exhibition of your heroism. The blazing faggots, the den of savage beasts, the upraised gibbet, and the cruel amphitheatre, no longer lift their terrific fronts; but there is the curled lip, the smile of derision,

the reserved deportment, the loss of friendship, there stand the sneering infidel, the incredulous man of science, the scoffing man of wit. Such agents and such means are ever at hand, to try the strength of your allegiance to the Gospel.

Deprecate cowardice as unworthy of your character and prospects, and as eminently displeasing to the Most High. What feature more unbecoming a child of God, and an heir of heaven, than timidity of disposition and conduct? And yet you cannot but observe such characters all around you, soldiers who hide themselves in the day of battle, servants who are most indolent when most is given them to do. They are willing to wear the white robe and join in the conqueror's song, but ah! to

be at their post and “*quit themselves like men*,” this they are loth to do. Oh, be not of their number. Consider the dignity of your rank, the solemnity of your vows, and the elevation of your hopes. Act worthy of yourself, your Redeemer, and your faith. Be yours the purpose and the prayer:

“Yes, I must fight, if I would reign:
Increase my courage, Lord,
To bear the cross—endure the shame,
Supported by Thy Word.”

Another feature is that of

ACTIVE BENEVOLENCE.

To *be* good and to *do* good make up the character of the Divine Parent, (Psalm 119: 68.) Of the blessed Savior it is written that “*He went about doing good.*” (Acts 10: 38.)

Would you be a worthy child and disciple, "go and do thou likewise." It is not enough that you have yourself received the blessings of forgiveness, peace, and an heirship of heaven. To enjoy these *alone* is not Christ-like! Listen to the command, "*let him that heareth (of Jesus) say to others come*" (and be his disciple.) Remember, too, that the test of discipleship is to "*gather with Him,*" to "*work in His vineyard,*" and that a part of pure religion and undefiled, is to "visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction;" and to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity."

"Count that day lost, whose low descending sun
Sees from thy hand no worthy action done.

One reason why you are detained so long in this world of sin and sorrow,

away from your heavenly home, is that you may be the almoner of the Most High in dispensing blessings to the needy and lost. Fix it in your desire and purpose to *do good* in some form, and to some person daily. Go forth in the morning with a determination of being not only good in heart, but benevolent in active life. Make it your purpose to relieve some distress—to enlighten some ignorance—to diminish misery and increase the sum of human well-being and well-doing. This is essential to perfection in Christian character. By your desire to attain the summit of moral excellence, by your wish to become assimilated to the Divine Redeemer, by your instinctive longing after the purest felicity,

“Rouse to some work of high and holy love,
And thou an angel’s happiness shall know,
Shall bless the earth while in the world above.

The good begun by thee shall onward flow
In many a branching stream and wider grow,
The seeds that in these few and fleeting hours,
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven’s immortal bowers.”

S Y M M E T R Y

is a feature worthy of special notice. Boldness, courtesy, zeal, mildness, activity, devotion, confidence, each must maintain its due proportion with that blending of power and influence fitly symbolised by the beautiful *rainbow*. As a related feature, let there be *consistency*, which is but symmetry in another form. There is a style of piety which has received the expressive title of *spasmodic*. With painful rapidity

it passes from the extremes of summer heat to wintry cold—from seraphic zeal and a martyr's boldness to apathetic indifference, and a faint-hearted denial. Oh, watch, pray, strive against it. It is not meant that perfect equilibrium of christian feeling is at all times to be expected. Natural temperament and conditions of the bodily system have much to do with religious experience, more than a casual observer might think allowable. But avoid extremes, especially in the *retrograde*. Say not to-day, "though all men forsake Thee yet *will not I*," and *to-morrow* be found declaring with heartless affrontery, "*I know not the man*." Many do this in practice who would not dare to give language to their thought. Let there be *symmetry* in respect to your char-

acteristic traits, and keep on the highway of an even and consistent course of opinion, feeling and conduct.

CHEERFULNESS

is the last feature to be named. Says the Psalmist, "Serve the Lord with *gladness*." The apostle enjoins it upon the Philippian Christians, that they "*rejoice* in the Lord always." The people of the world profess to regard these precepts as quite impossible. In their estimation, piety, by restraining the natural inclinations produces a servitude destructive of all happiness. *Such is not your experience.* You have made trial of both masters—self and Christ—and from your heart you can declare that there is a delight in serving the Lord to which you were once a

stranger. Your language is, "My happiest moments have been those of most complete self-sacrifice, most entire yielding of soul and body to my Heavenly Father's will. I never knew what happiness was, until I bowed a contrite prodigal before the cross." Cherish that joyous disposition—manifest it in your words and acts, and let your habitual deportment illustrate the truth that, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

In reply, then, to your first and very important question, let me urge you to become in the highest attainable degree, an *intelligent, devout, conscientious, fearless, active, symmetrical and cheerful* Christian. Aim at nothing less. Stop not this side of a full exemplification of these seven features of character.

You may not realize this description in all its parts until years have elapsed, perhaps not until your "*corruptible shall have put on incorruption*." But yield not to discouragement and despair. As was said in the commencement of this letter, your results will very much correspond with your aims. Let your motto be "*upward and onward*." Nothing below the skies is perfect. Progress is the law of all finite existences. Christian character is like the *sun* which "*shineth more and more unto the perfect day*." It is like the *implanted seed*, "*first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear*." Say with an apostle, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the

mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"Ever live that each to-morrow
Find you farther than to-day."

Though often faint under the burden you are compelled to bear, though often tempted to cease endeavors which seem so unproductive of desired results—yet *go on*, adding to your knowledge, piety—to piety, usefulness and an assimilation in all things to Him who has said, "Be ye *perfect*, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

Lean upon His Almighty arm for support, gaze upon the crown He has set before you, until the race is run, the victory achieved, and the perfect day of wisdom, holiness, peace and glory beam upon your sanctified and enraptured soul.

LETTER II.

Popular Amusements.

DEAR *Friend*

I am pleased to hear you inquire respecting the *places of amusement to which it is right for you to go, and the kinds of entertainment in which you may properly participate?* The calls which these make upon your time and interest are so many and urgent, that you ought to have well defined limits, beyond which no solicitation of friendship, or fear of censure, will induce you to pass. The religion of Christ finds us social beings, and does not debar from a gratification of this na-

tural susceptibility. The stoic, the hermit, and the nun, alike err; the Bible being our guide of judgment. But though "in the world," as a member of society, and though you may and ought to wear a glad countenance, and a deportment indicating with all clearness that

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less;"

yet there are places to which you may be tempted to go, but in which you should never be found; scenes in which you may be solicited to mingle, but to which you yield at the hazard of subsequent sorrow and repentance. Respecting these, there is, I am aware, a diversity of opinion among good people, rendering the path of duty often difficult to ascertain. Such being the case, I

have concluded to annex a few questions, by an honest and prayerful reference to which, you may be aided in arriving at a correct view of duty in respect to this very important subject.

You are invited to a place of entertainment, with the probable scenes of which you are previously apprised. Before consenting to be present, thoughtfully and prayerfully ponder these questions, and act in view of the *replies* they conscientiously suggest.

1. Can I, before going to that place, *enter my closet and with an honest heart ask my heavenly Father to bless me while there?* The propriety of this test is too obvious to require an argument. That which cannot be pondered and approved in your closet before God, ought not to be assented to and

enjoyed in public, and with many eyes upon you. A single incident may help to impress this thought upon your memory. The Rev. Mr. *Romaine*, of London, was one evening invited to a friend's house to tea, after which the hostess asked him to *play at cards*, to which he made no objection. The cards were produced, and the game about to commence, when the venerable minister said, "*Let us ask the blessing of God.*" "Ask the blessing of God!" said the lady in great surprise, "I never heard of such a thing at a game of cards." Mr. Romaine then inquired, "Ought we to engage in anything upon which we cannot ask His blessing?" This gentle reproof put an end to the card playing.

Says Bishop Wilson, "He that is not

satisfied that *plays* are an unlawful diversion, let him, *if he dare*, offer up this prayer to God before he goes, "*Lord, lead me not into temptation, and bless me in what I am now to be employed!*"

2. *Can I discover any direct and necessary connection between a participation in those scenes and the great end of my existence?* How explicit the injunction, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" and again, "glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's!" If there be any sources of gratification between which and the divine glory you can see no direct connection, what other evidence do you need to have, that their enjoyment should have no time or thought of

yours? Your *body*, with its limbs and senses—your *mind*, with its faculties and powers—your *heart*, with its emotions and passions, belong to God, and in His service they should be supremely employed. Better have them lie passive, than used in ways which do not answer to this great end of your existence and redemption.

3. Is going to that place *consistent with my character and position as a Christian, and while there shall I willingly be reminded that I am a member of the church?* Personal religion is not a thing of times and occasions; it is not like a garment to be worn or put off as inclination or convenience suggests. A worthy disciple of Christ is a Christian *every where*, being no more willing to lay aside his

character than his *hope*. No considerations of shame, or desire of self-gratification, should avail to make you unwilling to admit that you are a member of the church of Jesus. And yet how many places are there to which you may be solicited to go, where you would altogether prefer having no such question asked, and a blush would mantle your cheek if compelled to say, "*I am.*" O, beware of all such assemblages and festivities. They are no places for you.

4. Will my presence in that place, and joining in those festivities *comport with my daily prayer*, "*Lead me not into temptation,*" or the important precept, "*abstain from all appearance of evil?*" In regard to the former clause of this question, the example of Christ is eminently instructive. In speaking

of His presence in the wilderness, Mrs. Fry uses this emphatic language, "Pure and sinless as He was, and all powerful as He knew himself to be, Jesus did not go of *His own choice* into the wilderness, to try His strength against the tempter. It is distinctly said, '*He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness,*' as if to distinguish that act from every other of His life, and show us that even *He* went not *willingly* to meet his Father's enemy, and listen to the language of seduction. Do we venture to say, that if our own principles are good, there is no risk to us in any company, in any place? We can walk side by side with the enemies of God, and sit in the counsels of sinners without any danger of being seduced from our attachment to Him and His cause? Jesus

was not thus bold, though He might have been. If we set one step into the wilderness of temptation without the leading of the Spirit, for the fulfillment of some known command, we follow not in the footsteps of our Lord. God took him there, that He might in all things be more than conqueror. God may take us there, and if he does, it will be to conquer too. But of those who go thither unbidden, to break a lance with the enemy for pastime; or, knight-errantlike, to free the world from his enchantments, let him not think he does as Jesus did."

We read in Ecclesiastical history of a damsel supposed to be possessed of the devil. The Bishop approached her and commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her. But he stoutly re-

plied, "*I will not;*" adding as the reason of his refusal, "she is my lawful prize. I took her on my own territory. I found her not in the temple, but in the *theater.*" Be this narrative true or false it has an important *moral*. Would you avoid being conquered, *go not in the way of temptation*—and while you are to cease *doing evil* abstain also from what *appears* to be wrong.

5. Is the place of entertainment one that, in the opinion of the community, is wholly *worldly*, and where *thoughts and words about God and Christ, the soul and eternity, are irrelevant and inadmissible?* There are such places, and your own judgment will tell you that they are not for the followers of Christ. Several persons are standing together conversing upon current events,

when one says, "I learn that Miss —— is becoming serious." "Not very, I apprehend," responds another, "for *I saw her at the BALL last night.*" What volumes in that reply! Is it for you to be where your Savior is not admitted? Are you willing to join in amusements where the mention of His name would provoke a smile, or a frown, or at least be the precursor of general silence? I do not say that it is *advisable* to introduce religious topics in all places. Judgment must be used in this matter. This only is suggested, that the *employments* of the place do not *prevent* so doing. If they do, then they are not for *you*. It is not for you to be where Christ is not invited, or if so, would not come. You are to do what under similar circumstances He would do. If not, you

are unfaithful to His interests, you impair your own usefulness, and are in danger of hearing it asked from heaven, "what doest thou here?"

6. *Is it a place in which I should be willing to die?* If there be nothing more *certain* than that you must ere long leave the world, nothing is more *uncertain* than the time and manner in which your departure may occur. "*Be ever ready,*" is the call of reason and the Bible. It is not enjoined that you have no preference as to where, and how you may be engaged, when the fatal messenger arrives; this only is urged, that you find no cause of deep regret and shame in being found thus employed when the "*Bridegroom cometh.*" Have you never read of death in a ball room? The number of such

occurrences is by no means small. Have you forgotten the burning of Richmond theater, with the destruction of scores of lives by the devouring flame?— And is the ball room, the theater, or the card table, a place from which you would like to ascend to your final destiny? Ah, no! Then they and their like are no places for you, of whom it is said, "*At such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.*" Two professors of religion were standing at the door of a theater in the city of New-York, when one of them proposed to go in and see the play, and desired his friend to accompany him. The other declined the invitation, giving this as his reason, "If I should go in and be called thence into eternity, and should be asked at the gate of heaven

where I came from, I should be ashamed to answer." Let not the seeming improbability of your being in any such place when death occurs, stand in the way of your thinking, "how deeply should I regret being there in the fatal hour." Avoid the possibility of its occurrence by listening to no solicitation thitherward, however sweetly it may charm and strongly attract.

7. *Should I live to return from that place, is it probable that I shall find myself any wiser, better, happier and stronger to do good or resist evil than I now am?* Progress in these respects is equally a duty and privilege, while all that you do or enjoy should have these for their results. It is obvious to your frequent observation, that an habitual attendance upon the places

of popular gathering and amusement rather enervates than strengthens character in all these features. Who ever came from the ball room or theater, really improved in head or heart? What is there in the circus or the card table to impart strength and force to the moral character? The late Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia, was once in conversation with a lady who was speaking of the pleasure she anticipated at the theater in the evening. "What, madam, do you go to the theater?" "Yes," was the reply, "and don't you go, Doctor?" "No, madam, I never go to such places." "Why, sir, do you not go? do you think it sinful?" said she. He replied, "I never will publish to the world that I think Jesus Christ a hard master, and religion an unsatisfying portion, which

I should do if I went on to the devil's ground in quest of happiness." This argument was short, but conclusive. The lady determined not to go. And so may it be with you ! This amusement and the like do not furnish the mind with valuable thoughts for after meditation—do not make the effort of striving to enter into the strait gate more easy—do not embolden the spirit to fight manfully the good fight of faith—do not render love more fervent, zeal more ardent, purpose more pure, and the whole spiritual energies more intent on being and doing good. Whatever does not contribute to these results is not allowable. This life is a period of moral education and discipline for that which lies beyond, and it is abundant proof against

any proffered amusement that it does not contribute to those results.

You may think that the course of conduct prescribed by these questions is quite too limited and stringent. *Which* question will you omit? Is it the *first*? the *second*? the *third*? Read them again. Ponder their meaning. Bring them to the light of conscience and the Bible. If there be any that comport not with these guides of judgment *strike them from the list*, but be careful to *reserve all that you cannot deny or gainsay*.

These, you say, condemn many amusements at present very popular—many in which members of the church participate—many that receive the sanction of relatives and friends. Grant all this, but to whom is committed the

decision of the question as it relates to your practice? Far be it from me to encourage in you feelings of disrespect towards any, and especially towards your seniors in age and social rank, and yet I would insist that this subject calls for decided, though courteous *independence* of will and purpose. In the last day no wrong act will be overlooked, because it met the approval, or was shared in common with other persons, and those older, and (in your estimation) wiser and better than yourself. "To the Law and to the Testimony"—Do as they direct, and omit what you believe that they condemn, and that upon your own responsibility. This may be done without any necessary impropriety or unkindness towards those who differ from you. Let me suggest,

also, that you *act* rather than *speak*. If questioned as to your *reasons* for declining to follow the example of those around you, be ready to assign them fully and frankly. But as a general rule, it is better to *do* than to *argue*, to allow your *deeds* rather than your *words* to speak and influence. As amusements of a public and social character appeal to a strong natural susceptibility and thus are among ever present temptations, especially to the young, let me entreat you with affectionate earnestness, to act upon this subject with much deliberation and prayer. Whatever, from past experience, and by strong probability, cannot be made to consist with the Divine glory—with the example of Christ—with advancing piety and usefulness—*avoid it*, at any

sacrifice of personal inclination, and present good opinion of others. If it be a *right hand, cut it off*. If it be a *right eye, pluck it out*.

Occasions may arise, when the temptation to a compliance with what conscience forbids seems well-nigh irresistible. That wisdom which “cometh from above,” which is never withheld when it is honestly desired and humbly sought will enable you to meet such exigencies with honor to your principles, and usefulness to those around you. Let one instance suffice, by way of illustration, and with it my letter will close.

Lord ———, a nobleman of great wealth, was a man of the world. His pleasures were drawn from his riches, his honors and friends. His daughter was the idol of his heart. Much had

been expended in her education, and well did she repay, in her intellectual dowments, the solicitude of her parents. She was highly accomplished, amiable in her disposition, and winning in her manners. They were all strangers to God. At length, Miss —— attended a Methodist meeting in London, was deeply awakened, and soon happily converted. Now she delighted in the service of the sanctuary, and social religious meetings. To her the charms of Christianity were overpowering. Frequenting those places where she met with congenial minds, animated with similar hopes, she was often found in the house of God.

The change was marked by her fond father with intense solicitude. To see his lovely daughter thus infatuated,

was to him a source of deep grief, and he resolved to correct her erroneous notions on the subject of the real pleasures and business of life. He placed at her disposal large sums of money, hoping she would be induced to go into the fashions and extravagances of others of her birth, and leave the Methodist meetings; but she maintained her integrity. He took her on long and frequent journeys, conducted towards her in the most engaging manner, in order to divert her mind from religion; but she still delighted in the Savior. After failing in many projects, which he fondly anticipated would be effectual in subduing the religious feelings of his daughter, he introduced her into company under such circumstances that she must either join in the recreation

of the party, or give high offense. Hope lighted up the countenance of the doting but misguided father, as he saw his snare about to entangle in its meshes the object of his solicitude. It had been arranged among his friends, that several young ladies should, on the approaching festival, give a song, accompanied by the piano forte. The hour arrived—the party assembled. Several had performed their parts to the great delight of the party, who were in high spirits. Miss —— was now called on for a song, and many hearts beat high in hopes of victory. Should she decline, she was disgraced. Should she comply, their triumph was complete. This was the moment to seal her fate. With perfect self-possession, she took her seat at the piano

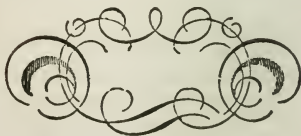
forte, ran her fingers over the keys, and commenced playing and singing, in a sweet air, the following words:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee ;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known ;
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own !

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too ;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not like them, untrue.
And whilst thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends disown me,
Show Thy face and all is bright.

She arose from her seat. The whole party was subdued. Not a word was spoken. Her father wept aloud. One by one they left the house. Lord ——

never rested till he became a Christian. He lived an example of Christian benevolence, having given to benevolent Christian enterprises at the time of his death half a million of dollars.



LETTER III.

Extent of Responsibility.

DEAR *Friend*

You are no *fatalist*. You believe that your conduct is so much under your personal control that you are *responsible* for what you *do* and *omit*, otherwise you are not a moral being, *morality* and *responsibility* being inseparably conjoined. But you ask as to the *extent* of your responsibility, implying thereby that there may be things for which you are *not* accountable, and that you would know where the *negative* ends and the *positive* begins.

Let me remark, then, that you are

not responsible for the performance of deeds which lie beyond your *physical and intellectual power*. You cannot be in two places at the same time—compete with the lion in strength and the eagle in speed—grasp the Universe with the intellect of an Archangel—or change the heart of a fellow-man with the energy of Almighty grace.

Respect to the rights of your fellow men is a second limit to your responsibility. To restrain a neighbor from prodigal habits by infringing his personal liberty—to supply the wants of the needy by money *stolen* from the abodes of the rich—to aid in sending the gospel to the heathen by wealth that belongs to the widow and fatherless—is to allow the end to justify the means, to which there is a decided re-

monstrance in the words of Jehovah:
"I, the Lord, love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt sacrifice."

Responsibility is frequently limited by *innocent obligations previously formed*. Says Dr. Wayland, "Wherever the fulfillment of a promise we have innocently made comes into collision with a general command, the specific obligation takes precedence. Thus, I am under general obligation to show kindness to my brother. If he can be materially assisted in business by a loan of money with which I can accommodate him, I am bound to do it. But if, in ignorance of his situation, I have entered into a positive obligation to loan this money to my neighbor, much as I may regret it, I am bound by a previous contract. An innocent

obligation once contracted is binding until it be either discharged or annulled by mutual contract."

You are not responsible for the performance of an action, when it cannot be performed without *using your power for other purposes than those for which it was committed to you*. A sheriff may carry into execution a sentence of death pronounced by a Judge, when, if his own act, it would be *murder*. I here refer, not to the *influence* which accompanies elevated station. That may and ought to be employed with all its force, but to that *authority* and *power* which attach to office, and which has been conferred for a specific object and no other.

Responsibility ceases when a *particular good cannot be accomplished*

without the presentation of wrong motives. Says Dr. Wayland again, "If I knew a man was likely to steal, I might innocently attempt to dissuade him by presenting before him the command of God and the love of Christ. If these motives failed, I might urge his own love to his family and his friends. And, again, if these failed, I might present before him the certainty of detection and move him by his simple dread of physical evil. All this would be innocent. But I should have no right to dissuade him by the consideration that if he did not steal at this time, it would be the means of enabling him with inevitable certainty and without fear of detection to *murder his enemy to-morrow.*"

Responsibility for the performance

of one duty, may be limited by the *more urgent claims of another duty of the same character*. This comparative urgency is effected by various circumstances. Sometimes by the greater *exigency*. Thus, if called upon to aid two men, one of whom had *swoned*, and the other was *bleeding to death*, no one would doubt that the latter required the earlier attention. Again, the course of duty is determined by the *amount of probable good to be effected*. Thus, if called to assist ten drowning men, and by one course I can save nine, but by pursuing it I must leave the other to his fate, I am bound to save the greater number. Again, *social relationship* must determine the comparative obligation. Were several persons in equal danger, I should be under

greater obligation to assist my father or my brother, than a stranger. On the same principle those who are near us have stronger claims than those who are afar off.

You are not responsible for the *opinions of your fellow men*. If, after using all legitimate means for communicating to them the truth, and bringing them to assent to your views, they will remain as they were, you are released from all obligation—the consequence is *theirs*.

For this classification of the "*limits of responsibility*," I am indebted to Dr. Wayland, whose treatise, should it come into your hand, will well repay a careful examination. A person who, like the pastor of a church, is in daily converse with those around him upon

matters of conscience and duty, not unfrequently meets with those who are deeply and painfully solicitous respecting their relation to certain claims which are apparently made upon them. "Am I called upon to do a certain thing? If I do it *not*, am I guilty, and will conscience and the Bible hold me accountable for the consequences? Would that I could ascertain just what is demanded in the premises!" It may be that you are not unfrequently in that position. If so, the *limitations* now named may be of assistance in enabling you to ascertain what is *not* required. Among them you may find some particulars which you have not heretofore properly considered, and an inattention to which has caused you unnecessary *disquiet* of mind.

It is but half the subject to learn what you are *not* expected to do. There is a *positive* aspect which demands your attention, and to its illustration the remainder of this letter will be devoted. I remark, then, that you *are responsible for your religious opinions*. I know that this is denied by some, who say that a man is no more accountable for his *belief* than for the hue of his skin, or the height of his stature. This is one of the most common maxims of infidelity, and very popular, especially among young men. It is specious, however, not deep; for if true of religious subjects, it must be so of all others, and thus the foundation of the whole political and social, as well as the moral fabric, is undermined. Without intending a full dis-

cussion of a topic so ample as this, I would not pass it by without a few sentences by way of argument and illustration.

The *importance* of our opinions is apparent from the fact that every sane and honest man will act as he thinks. The instances in which his conclusions and actions are allowed to diverge, are the exceptions, having some special end in view, and not the general rule. If a physician *thinks* that his patient is but slightly ailing, his attention will be to a corresponding extent slight and his visits few; whereas, hours and days of watchful anxiety will he pass in the sick room, if he fears that death is at hand. So in *religion*—he who believes that Christ is a DIVINE PERSON will worship Him as

God, which the person will not do, who deems him but a creature. Here the difference of *opinion* makes one an idolater and the other an irreligionist. With such an instance before him, who can say that it is a matter of little moment what is *believed* or *disbelieved*. They are not "graceless bigots" who contend for "*modes of faith*," and the poet himself would hardly have said so, but that he wanted to complete the couplet—a couplet which in two lines contains as dangerous an error as human pen ever inscribed. If there be this connection between *believing* and *doing*, then the same reasoning which would indicate responsibility for the latter, must apply to the former. Does community, does the law hold that physician innocent who neglects a patient

because he *believes* he is out of *danger* and will soon recover? When the Spirit of God changed the character of Saul of Tarsus, did he acquit himself of all guilt for his past misdeeds, because he “verily thought he was doing God service?” By no means! Nor will this plea avail any one. Error is always undesirable and injurious, and in some connections fatally destructive. Opinion is the germ of which conduct is the fruit. If a person have a wrong belief and act accordingly, he commits a misdeed, and for *that*, at least, is accountable : if he does not act as he thinks, then he is lacking in honesty. Here are the two horns of the dilemma between which Ld. Brougham, the poet Pope, and their admirers, may make choice. To you, my friend, I would say, bring your opin-

ions to the touchstone of common sense, universal consciousness, and above all, the Bible—seek to know what is true, and what is false—elevate your supplications to Him who has said “If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,” and you will not be allowed to wander far and remain long from the path of truth and duty. But impress it upon your mind that accountability attaches to your *sentiments*, equally as to anything you can call yours.

You are responsible for your *prevailing current of thought and emotion*. I use the conditional term “*prevailing*” as a relief from the despondency occasioned by the sentiments and passions of an exceptionable character, to which

you may occasionally be liable. These are the "fiery darts" of which the apostle speaks, cast into the soul by a malign agency, and which if not entertained, will do you no more harm than did the temptations presented to the Holy Jesus in the wilderness. For these you are not responsible, but only for their continuance and reigning power. The commands "*Give me thy heart,*" "Set your affection on things above," "Be spiritually minded," are all based upon the principle of control over your *habits* of thought and emotion, and your consequent responsibility for the *current* of your mental exercises. See to it that *as a whole* they are right, however much you may have to regret and mourn over occasional intrusions of the selfish and worldly.

You are responsible for your *words* and *deeds*. This feature needs no enlargement. If responsibility attaches not to what you *do* and *say*, then it belongs not to anything—then common law with its pains and penalties is a nullity. Then there is no meaning in the declarations: “By thy *words* thou shalt be justified, and by thy *words* thou shalt be condemned.” “For *every idle word* that men shall speak, they must give account thereof.” “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

You are responsible for *influence*. “No man liveth to himself.” “Such is the delicate framework of human society that every fibre and filament acts

upon the collected and concrete assemblage." You do not, cannot live entirely alone. You are ever impressing and being impressed—giving and receiving a character for good or ill. For the use you make of this creative energy, this ability to move and mold those who come within the circle of your acquaintance, you are responsible. From this obligation there is no being on earth who can absolve you.

You are responsible for *all the evil which you wilfully cause*. The man who puts a false light upon a rock-bound coast, must bear the guilt of the loss sustained to life and ship. He who engages in a trade which necessarily leads to beggary and woe, is accountable for every heaving sigh and falling tear resulting therefrom. While it is

wrong to do that which is *directly* harmful to others, (as slander, arson, and theft,) you are also accountable for evil to another which timely counsel might have prevented. A fearful truth, but taught the Bible over.

You are responsible for the good *you may do, but neglect to perform*. He who resides in a community where the pestilence is rife, and yet fails to communicate the knowledge he possesses of a sure remedy, is accountable for all the ravages that knowledge might have averted. He who is acquainted with facts which would carry peace and quiet to a domestic circle is accountable for every anxious care, every emotion of grief and fear which result from an unnecessary withholding of that heart-cheering intelligence. Other

illustrations of the same very obvious but important point will occur to your own mind.

You are responsible for the possession of that *high, moral and religious character, which results from a diligent improvement of the appropriate means.* The Bible, the throne of grace, the sanctuary, the social prayer meeting, the pious volume—these are at your command, and to use them aright is “*to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:*” while to neglect them is to be imperfect in both these respects. Here attaches a solemn accountability.

Admitting the truth of these rules, you cannot but appreciate how solemn a thing it is to be an inhabitant of earth, when such are the relations you sustain,

and such the responsibilities with which they are attended. When you consider that you are responsible for your religious opinions, your prevailing habits of feeling and deportment, your influence upon those around you, your power to avert evil and do good, and your improvement of the means of growth in moral excellence, you cannot fail to perceive the necessity of daily looking upward to Him who alone can enable you to meet such a trust with satisfaction to your own conscience, and the approbation of your God.



LETTER IV.

A Sabbath well spent.

DEAR *Friend*—

“How rich a boon has celestial mercy bestowed upon our laboring, toil-worn world in the day of sacred rest! What should we do as regards either soul or body without the SABBATH, to invigorate the impaired energies of the one, and recruit the wasted piety of the other! If the man of wealth and leisure, whose time is all his own, to spend it, if it so please him to do, in reading, meditation and prayer, feels little need of such a season of repose, not so they who are compelled to engage in the

activities of busy life. How sweet to them the reflection, 'To-morrow is the Sabbath of the Lord,' and how do they hail its dawning light with the exclamation of gladsomeness and joy,

"Welcome, sweet day of rest."

"Oh, what a blessed day is the Sabbath, which allows us a precious interval wherein to pause, to come out from the thickets of worldly concerns and give ourselves up to heavenly and spiritual objects. Blessed day! interposed between the waves of worldly business like the divine path of the Israelites through the upraised Jordan!"

"The Sundays of man's life
Threaded together on time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday, heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife,
More plentiful than hope."

It is of the day, thus truly and eloquently extolled by the Divine,* the Statesman,† and the Poet,‡ that I would address you in this letter. Supposing you to be intelligently convinced respecting the divine institution of the Sabbath—its perpetual obligation—the propriety of the change from the seventh to the first day of the week—and its religious in distinction from its merely political or civil character and design—I think that I hear you inquire as to the *means of deriving from the day its highest spiritual benefit*; that is, “how am I to render the Sabbath to the largest extent promotive of those beneficial results for which it was originally intended by heavenly wisdom and

* Rev. J. A. James. † Hon. Wm. Wilberforce.

‡ George Herbert.

mercy?" This important and pertinent question will be best answered by naming several rules or directions, to which you will do well to give habitual regard.

DIRECTION I.

Let Saturday evening find you closing all secular business at an hour sufficiently early to allow due preparation for the engagements of the morrow. Among the ancient Jews the Sabbath began at six o'clock on the preceding evening and a period of preparation at three o'clock of the afternoon. Until within a few years the custom has prevailed throughout New England of commencing holy time at sunsetting of the closing week, terminating at the same hour of the sacred

day. That habit has fallen into general disuse, a circumstance not to be regretted if with the sanctity of Saturday evening there must be the secularity of conversation and pursuit which too often characterised the evening of the Lord's day. It is to be feared, however, that while the Sabbath evening is far more profitably spent than it once was, the business of the preceding day receives an intensity of care illy befitting the eve of holy time. The tradesman, artisan and housewife will testify, that Saturday is usually the busiest and most fatiguing portion of the week. This earnest and late pressure of secular engagements stands much in the way of a profitable Sabbath. Arrange your affairs so that you can retire to your home at an early hour of Satur-

day evening—avoid, to the greatest extent, an attendance upon all public gatherings for business, literature and pastime—let the history of the six past days come before you through the medium of questions like these: Where have I been? how engaged? what mercies have I received? what obligations fulfilled? what duties omitted? what progress made in mental or moral improvement? how has the world been benefitted or injured by my continuance in it? Let these and like questions receive an honest, earnest survey; dwell upon them until conscious of those emotions of gratitude, contrition and hope, which they are intended to enkindle. After a fitting period of thoughtful retrospection and humble, fervent devotion, retire to rest with the prayer:

“Prepare me, most blessed God, by sleep and rest, to take my part in the duties of to-morrow. Give me that sense of sin which leads to a full confession of its guilt and faith in the atonement of Christ for its pardon. Give me that adoring gratitude for all His mercies, especially for the gift of a Savior, which may incline me to praise Thee with joyful lips. Oh, let not the coming Sabbath be defectively used, but let it be so improved, by public and private means of grace, as to advance my meetness for the service of that eternal Sabbath which remaineth for the people of God.”

DIRECTION II.

Let the hour of rising on Sabbath morning be the same as on other days

of the week. As it need not be earlier, so it ought not to be later. The temptation is altogether in the latter direction and *there* must be your watchfulness and strife. Abuse not the privilege of resting from labor, by making the Sabbath a day of bodily sloth. There is argument and force in the somewhat homely stanza of Watts:

“This is the day the Lord arose
So *early* from the dead,
Why should I keep my eyelids close
And waste *wy* hours in bed?”

The common apology of *having nothing to do* illy becomes one of your profession and hope. A Christian, and nothing special to do on Sabbath morning! A lover of the Bible—of meditation—of prayer—and nothing to do! Have you read as much from your Bible, your volume of pious instruction

and biography, during the week as you desired? Have you prayed for all the persons and objects legitimately calling for your supplications? Have you reviewed and pondered upon heavenly themes to the largest desirable degree? You feel your deficiency in all these respects. With these important pursuits demanding attention, the Sabbath is the last day to be abridged by lengthened repose. Says the Psalmist, "I will awake *early*." So do *you*. Awake to prayer and meditation, to contrite confession and grateful praise. Arise early to seek the favor of your heavenly Parent and Redeemer.

"His morning smiles bless all the day."



DIRECTION III.

Let your earliest thoughts have reference to the special design, duties, and privileges of the day. As the Sabbath is begun so you will be apt to continue and end it. Let it be commenced with a slothful body and a worldly mind, and you may be sure to find it of little benefit to your spiritual character and prospects. What suggestive topics present themselves upon the opening of this hallowed season! Creation and Redemption, with the displays they make of the divine perfections:—the eventful history of Him whom the day commemorates:—the blessings of God's providence and grace:—the ample provision made, through the atonement, for all your wants in this world and that which

is to come:—visions of glory foretold as yours and already opening to your delighted view :—how teeming with thought are these topics to one who gives them an earnest and prayerful attention. Guard well the avenue of your mind against worldly and selfish thoughts and purposes. A London merchant, who lived in the environs of the metropolis, remarked to his pastor, that *he always left his business on Saturday evening on London bridge, to be taken up there on Monday morning.* Admirable resolution that and worthy of universal adoption. If, as your mind opens to an active exertion of its powers on Sabbath morning, thoughts of business and pleasure demand admittance, say to these dangerous visitors, “Get thee hence—to-morrow for you—to-day for my God!”

DIRECTION IV.

You are among the number of those who deem it both a duty and privilege to go up to the house of the Lord and worship with His people on this holy day. Allow me to suggest a few thoughts respecting this mode of employing a part of its sacred hours.

(1.) Having selected that place of worship most consistent with your opinions or taste, *make that the place of your habitual attendance.* The custom is much to be deprecated of wandering from one house of worship to another, as present inclination or the passing popularity of a preacher may attract. Have a recognised place in some sanctuary, and never be seen elsewhere except for some obvious reason. This attendance upon *your own church*

is required by a regard to your permanent benefit, your covenant obligation, and respect to the feelings of your minister.

(2.) *Be an habitual attendant upon at least two services.* The custom is becoming painfully prevalent of attending service in the morning and remaining at home during the afternoon. This is peculiarly the case in city congregations, where the diminution of auditors is at least one half. This is not as it should be. Three hours, the total of both services, is surely not too much time to devote to the public worship of the Lord. Without insisting upon your presence at an evening service, let me urge you to be in your place twice on each Sabbath.

(3.) *Be punctual.* Habitual tardi-

ness is unnecessary, discourteous, and morally wrong. Said a pious lady, when asked why she was always early at church, "It is a part of my religion not to disturb the religion of others." Think not to enter so quietly that you cannot be seen. This cannot be. The preacher at least sees you, and to his regret and annoyance.

(4.) *Let your conduct in the house of God become your relation to your fellow attendants—the preacher—and above all, Him whom you have come to worship.* This suggestion is opposed to all unnecessary movements of the body—all diverting of the head from the speaker—all gazing upon the audience, and all conversation. Sluggish bodily attitudes will produce mental langour. While in the sanctuary give your *whole being* to the Lord.

(5) "*Take heed how ye hear.*"—Let it be with a *heart prepared* by previous meditation and prayer:—with the highest *reverence and esteem* of the glorious gospel, recollecting the sufferings it cost and the issues consequent upon its reception or rejection:—with fixed and earnest *attention*:—with *impartiality*, allowing the speaker to introduce such topics and so discuss them as to him seems most likely to do good:—with constant *self application*, ever saying, 'that counsel, that reproof, that appeal is for *my* benefit:—with *candor*, avoiding that suspicious temper which induces you to think that the preacher has a sinister motive in the matter or manner of his speech:—with a *resolution of obedience*, remembering the practical tendency of every

Christian doctrine, and that the utmost attention in hearing it is unavailing which fails of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience:—with a *determination to retain and perpetuate its impressions*. Heeding these suggestions, the preaching of the Gospel will answer in your experience its designed effect of enabling you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(6.) Participate in all the services, to the largest possible extent. Do not let the minister do the praying and the choir the singing, while you sit and *listen*. Unite with them, so that He who looketh upon the heart will see that you are a *worshiper*, and not a mere attendant upon the worship of others. Are you where a form of

prayer is used, use that form heartily, if where the service is extemporaneous, attention will enable you to respond in your soul, if not audibly. You are expected to worship the Most High in spirit and in truth.

(7.) Remain entirely quiet until the services are completed, and then move slowly and reverently from the house. This suggestion is opposed to the habit of closing the Hymn Book and placing it in its place while the choir is yet singing—attending to articles of dress, taking the hat in hand, opening the pew door, while the benediction is being pronounced—hastening forward to be early out of doors—and the like unbecoming habits. Avoid them, for they are all wrong. I like the habit of pausing at the close of worship and

spending a few moments in silent prayer. It is a fitting and salutary custom.

Thus have I suggested a few thoughts as to your deportment in the house of God. They are but HINTS, but your own mind will carry them out as may be most needful for your own improvement.

DIRECTION V.

Let your deportment during the intervals of public worship be consistent with the design and obligations of the day. But a small proportion of the Sabbath can be spent in the sanctuary. During many hours of the day you must be at home. And how shall that time be passed? In bodily repose? In conversation upon business, politics, do-

mestic plans, social amusements, and other topics as remote as the poles from the spirituality of the day? In reading history, fiction, newspapers? Alas! the many who return a *practical affirmative* to all these questions! But let it not be so with you. Consider the whole day as holy time, and yield not to the temptation of conversing upon matters which bear a purely worldly character. This is destructive of those beneficial results to relieve which the day was instituted and in direct contradiction of the command, not to speak our own thoughts during its sacred hours.

DIRECTION VI.

Do not consider the design of the day wholly answered by a faithful attention to its passing services. It was

designed to make you wiser and holier, that you may be more actively good and active. Wearied and faint, under the travel and toil of the week, on this day you go to the heavenly spring, there to revive your thirsty spirit, you approach the heaven spread table, to eat the celestial manna and be strengthened for another term of service in the toilsome vineyard. Ere retiring to rest, devote a period to thoughtful reflection upon questions like these: "At what time did I arise this morning and how begin the day? If absent from public worship, was it for a reason my conscience approves? Did I go to the Lord's house in a thoughtful and prayerful attitude of mind, and was I considerate respecting my deportment when there? Have I a distinct recollection

of the truths I heard discoursed upon—how argued—illustrated, and applied? What am I the wiser, the holier, the stronger to do good and resist evil, than when the day dawned? Have I striven against slothfulness of body and mind, and do I feel that the day has been fitly spent, so that when to-morrow opens I shall find the path of duty clearer to behold and easier to tread?”

Questions like these may aid you in arriving at an assured conviction respecting the manner in which you have met your obligations to this heaven-appointed season.

In closing this letter let me urge upon you the exercise of GRATITUDE TOWARD GOD for the appointment of the Sabbath. Its rest has been well compared to “the soft slumbers of midnight

when it covers with its soft folds an agitated and troubled mind and a body overpowered with toil." Says good Mr. Herbert:

"Sundays the pillars are
On which heaven's palace arched lies ;
The other days fill up the spare
And hollow room with vanities."

Esteem them as oases in a desert, as reception days, when you can approach near to the Divine Throne and receive your Sovereign's blessing.

Be jealous of all public measures, which directly or indirectly desecrate the Sabbath day. Said a late distinguished statesman, when traveling over New England and observing her everywhere scattered churches, with the order and quiet of her Sabbath days, "I never beheld such communities before.

This is the glory of the land." And truly it is so; and who will not pray that it may so remain throughout all time? A consecrated Sabbath and national prosperity go hand in hand.

Resist all temptations to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. If solicited to do that which wears the aspect of secularity and worldly business, be sure that it is a "work of necessity and mercy." Upon this subject it is with emphasis needful that you have a "conscience void of offense toward God and man."

Lastly, judge of yourself, personally, by the respect you give to this holy day. Do you welcome its return and are you diligent in an improvement of the means it offers you of becoming wiser and holier? Is it habitually spent

by you in such a manner as allows you to say at its close:

“How sweet, a Sabbath thus to spend,
In hopes of one that ne’er shall end.”

Then may you pass a favorable judgment respecting your love to God, and your preparation for that world of which the sacred season is an earnest and a foretaste. As you would respect one of the most oft repeated obligations of the Divine volume—as you would employ one of the most efficient means of promoting spiritual holiness and peace, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”



LETTER V.

Reading the Bible.

DEAR *Sirinda*

While numberless objects above and around declare with trumpet tongue that *there is a God*, they furnish no clear and satisfactory answer to the questions, "What is His character, and how related to me? How may I avert His displeasure justly incurred by my many offenses, and how may I secure His blessing for this life and that which is to come?" Of all kinds of knowledge that is most important which respects these subjects, and yet it is one which unaided reason, however gifted by na-

ture, and strengthened by discipline, seeks in vain to explore and reach. Without a divine revelation man is a mournful mystery to himself, a wanderer in a dark and tangled and pathless wood, a mariner on mid-ocean, with no guiding light of sun, or moon, or star. But, praise to the all-merciful! as once in the physical, so now in the moral world. “*God said, let there be light, and there was light.*” Hence the BIBLE—blessed book!

“Star of eternity—the only star
By which the bark of man can navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
Securely.”

Blot from the human memory all that we have learned from its sacred pages, and it would be as though you had quenched the dayspring.

“ Let all the pagan writers join
To form one perfect book,
Great God—if once compared with thine,
How mean their writings look.

Not the most perfect rules they give,
Could show one sin forgiven,
Nor lead a step beyond the grave;—
But thine conducts to heaven.”

This book, my friend, is in your hand ; placed there by Him whose sovereign mercy is displayed in granting to you a *special* privilege, in distinction from the millions who are involved in the thick and impenetrable gloom of Pagan and Mohammedan error. And now you ask with earnest interest, “ How may I make the most of his heaven-descended blessing ? How render it to the highest extent available for my mental and moral improvement ? ” Important questions these, which I am greatly pleased to hear you ask. What

remains of this letter will be devoted to
*directions for reading the Bible with
greatest profit*

DIRECTION I.

Be intelligently convinced that the Bible is what it claims to be,—a book written by men whose minds were under a heavenly guidance and therefore containing “truth without any mixture of error.” These are bold claims and need not be received without examination. The Bible courts enquiry, knowing that it gains most where its evidences are most carefully scrutinized. Be not satisfied with the belief acquired by education, and popular opinions, but *examine for yourself*. As suggested in my first letter, our age abounds with treatises upon this important topic, from

21-1532A

the abstruse and far-reaching speculations of Bishop Butler, to the more popular pages of Nelson and Spring. Let me suggest that you obtain and keep near at hand one or more of these admirable volumes and *often pursue them*. The heart is skeptical because the commands and precepts of the Bible are so opposed to its urgent inclinations and desires. Store your mind with arguments in favor of the divine authenticity of the Bible, and the canonical authority of those books which, and which alone, we consider to be *the* Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

This intelligent conviction of the divine origin of the Bible—this faith in its unerring truth, must accompany you as page after page undergoes a studious examination. Ever keep this thought

before you: it is God's book, therefore it is true. Let not its deep things embarrass you, for these are strong arguments in favor of its being the product of a super-human mind; if you cannot comprehend all its revelations, attribute the fault to your limited capacity and not allow it to shake your confidence in the authenticity of the book itself. Remember that there is no middle ground between faith and infidelity. The Bible is an entire truth, or an absolute fiction. It does not, and cannot occupy a neutral position.

DIRECTION II.

Accompany the reading of the Bible with humble, earnest prayer to God. Says Bishop Horne: "When the word

of God is our study, the Spirit of God must be our teacher." The royal Psalmist was conscious of this necessity of divine illumination when he prayed, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Without the illuminating influence of God's Holy Spirit, your mind may be able to understand the meaning of the words and sentences as they pass before the eye—your imagination be charmed by the rich drapery in which the sacred sentiments are enrobed—your sensibility excited by its pathetic narratives, fearful warnings, precious promises, and earnest appeals, but you will read with the imperfect and limited vision of the blind man before the scales fell from his eyes, and neither heart or life will be benefitted thereby. "The waters of

the sanctuary may flow over your soul, but fail to fertilize and refresh; the manna which should serve for food will afford no nourishment; your spiritual knowledge, like the carved cherubim and palm-trees of the temple, will breathe no life and yield no fruit."

It is not needful that you always retire to some private place and give articulate expression to your desires. An upward-sent wish is known to Him who "looketh upon the heart," and is enough when the uttered prayer is impossible.

I have just met with a prayer written by Bishop Horne, which embodies in language so appropriate the blessings needed, that I venture to introduce it.

"O, Holy Spirit, make me to understand, embrace, and love the truth of the Gospel. Give me grace to read thy

word with the reverence and respect becoming the gracious manifestation of thy will to man; submitting my understanding and will wholly to thine. Cause me to believe thy word, to obey its command, to fear its judgments, and to hope in, and depend upon, thy gracious promises, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Who can doubt that such a prayer, preceding the social and private reading of the Bible, will aid the mind in understanding, and the heart in loving that blessed book!

DIRECTION III.

Make the Bible your STUDY. Said the Heavenly Teacher, "Search the Scriptures." How superficial is the acquaintance of many with this book of books! How little do they know,

because they as little enquire after, "the mind of the spirit." Hence they continue through life but novices in Biblical science—children in scriptural understanding. Let it not be so with you. The Bible is a *mine to be dug* ere the precious gems come to the light of day; an *ocean to be dived into*, ere you find the "pearl of great price."

Said Dr. Doddridge, "Daily experience convinces me that as a thousand charms discover themselves in the works of nature, when attentively viewed by the glass, which escaped the naked eye, so our admiration of the holy scriptures will rise in proportion to the *accuracy with which they are studied*."

Do not be content with reading a "Daily Text book," or a brief Psalm, and then hurry away to the business

and temptations of the word. But select a portion of some length and then by careful study, accompanied by prayer, investigate its meaning, resolved not to leave it until you form some definite opinion of what the Spirit would reveal for your faith, love, and obedience.

DIRECTION IV.

When studying a verse or paragraph, *examine carefully the context.* Make an effort to put yourself in the speaker or writer's stead, and become one with him in his train of narrative, argument and appeal. A want of attention to this important rule has led to many false and fatal interpretations of the sacred volume. The most absurd and destructive heresies have found their plausible confirmation in isolated phrases

considered apart from preceding or subsequent connections. Let two instances suffice by way of illustration. The late Dr. Miller, my honored theological teacher, at Princeton, mentioned in my hearing an interview he once had with a Shaking Quaker. I told him, said Dr. M., that while I greatly commended the diligence, economy, neatness and quietude of his people, I could not understand the Bible authority for *constant turning* in public worship. "Why," was the answer, "do you not remember, Friend Miller, the injunction, '*Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*'" The Universalist, with all confidence, quotes the declaration of St. Paul, "*All in Christ shall be made alive,*" in defence of his fatal creed. Let me enjoin it upon you that you consider well *what*

the writer was thinking about when he penned the sentence, and strive to get your mind into the position of his. To no species of composition is the rule more truthfully applicable than to the Scripture narratives and doctrines,

“In every work regard the writer’s end.”

D I R E C T I O N V .

Before attaching to any sentence a meaning, not literally its own, consider well whether this secondary interpretation is allowable and proper. Extreme views have been, and still are, entertained upon this subject; some contend that every sentence has a recondite spiritual meaning which should be sought for, with little regard to the sense which appears upon the surface, while others urge that the *literal* mean-

ing is the only one to be desired and respected. These extremes were represented in the ancient church, by the learned Grotius and Cocceius, giving rise to the saying which became proverbial that "Grotius could find Christ no where in the Bible, and Cocceius every where." The truth, as usual, lies between. While Grotius went too far in literalizing many texts which were evidently designed to embody a spiritual meaning, the rule of Cocceius would, as Limborch says, "make the Scriptures a mere Lisbian rule, or nose of wax, to be bent into any shape." The plain, obvious meaning should be first sought for, and if that accord with the context, be not disturbed at not being able to go farther. And yet there are but few passages, even in the Old Testament,

which may not be legitimately employed to throw light upon the Christian dispensation. It seems to me as wrong to make each historical event, each minute sentiment, each nail and board and curtain of the temple possess a christian application and design, as to compel a parable to preserve its unity with the sentiments conveyed in its details of persons, times and places. Be careful to avoid the extreme of dry, limited *literalism* on the one hand, and the excess of the *allegorical and typical* on the other; maintain a judicious and safe medium.

DIRECTION VI.

Read the Bible *consecutively*. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and (all) is profitable." If one part

demand attention because heaven-descended, all parts do. The municipal laws of the Jews; the names, ages, and deaths of the kings; the architecture, paraphernalia and internal arrangement of the temple, are of less importance than those portions which have more direct bearing on personal duty and destiny. But the former have their use and are not to be omitted or receive a hasty glance. I would suggest that the morning and evening of each day be devoted to a study of the Bible, *in course* reserving for other occasions that special attention to the Psalms, Prophecies, Gospel and Epistles, which are their appropriate due, as being "profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness." More time is given, and that properly to

the New than to the Old Testament. To this no exception need to be taken, farther than to put you on your guard against even an unexpressed and practical disparagement of the latter. Creation, the antedeluvian and patriarchal ages, the devotional Songs of David, the preceptive counsels of Solomon, are all well entitled to your thoughtful study. Give them each a full share of attention, which can be alone done by reading the several books *in order*, thus avoiding an omission of parts seemingly dry, uninteresting, and of little profit.

DIRECTION VII.

Read the Bible for *personal improvement*. Whatever be the portion that engages your attention, whether history, prophecy, parable or precept;

search diligently for that practical benefit which you, as an individual, are to receive therefrom. The New Testament is so directly preceptive that there is less danger of reading it without a personal reference than the Old Testament. But remember that the latter was the *gospel to the Jews*, and contains, as you will find on examination, not a little to bear upon yourself in the way of counsel, warning, and hope. Take this blessed book into your hand, with the language of earnest enquiry, "I will hear what the Lord will say unto *me*," and His voice will emanate from each chapter and verse. "Did the Most High do this to that person for that cause, must I not expect that He will do the same to me in like circumstances?" That thought in mind will make

the whole Bible a constant teacher, addressing you personally, telling you what to *do*, and what to *omit*, what you must expect as the result of evil doing and what of well doing.

Remember, that the grand design of the Bible is the improvement of your moral character, in order to your happiness beyond the grave. Pass not by a single paragraph until you find yourself wiser in mind and better in heart from its perusal.

DIRECTION VIII.

Remember the Bible. As the volume is designed to regulate and control your daily conduct, it is needful that its contents be ever at hand for practical use. Of what benefit are sword and shield to a warrior, if when going out to

meet his foes, they are left in his tent? Of what advantage are compass and chart to the mariner, if, when in mid ocean he finds that these have been left on shore? You are ever on the field of strife—ever on the troubled deep—and there is not a passing hour in which you do not need the Bible to counsel and encourage, to defend and save you. Says the pious King of Israel, “Thy word have I *hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*”

Would you learn the value of a *remembered Bible*, contemplate our Lord in the wilderness. Assailed by the tempter in ways most wily, persevering and severe, how did He defend Himself? “Not with appeals to what the adversary might well have understood, His own eternal God-head, the immutable

purpose of His deity, and His acquaintance with his base design;" but as if to manifest His attachment to the inspired record and illustrate its power in circumstances of greatest severity and exhibit the importance of having it "hid in the heart." His weapon of defense was, "*It is written.*" Three times did the enemy return to the assault, and three times was he foiled by the same shield—the BIBLE! "Go and do thou likewise," for the same foe is tempting you to a course of conduct, fatal to your well being, present and future. An old divine says, that "Christians should be *walking Bibles*," and some of them have become almost such. Jerome, learned by heart the whole scriptures, meditating on each verse. Beza could repeat in his old age the

entire epistles, having learned them in his youth. Zuinglius, Cromwell, (Earl of Essex,) and Bishop Ridley, could do the same. And thus with many others of ancient and modern days. Fill your memory with Bible facts, and doctrines and counsels and warnings in Bible language. In this way you honor the Bible and promote your own highest well being. When the waterpots were filled with water, the fluid was turned into wine. So will it be to your spiritual frame, when your memory is *full of the Gospel*.

DIRECTION IX.

Pause and *meditate* upon what you read. Reading and meditation are distinct exercises, though each is essential to the perfection of the other. Their

unity and difference are well illustrated by the following similitude. I received this morning a letter from a beloved friend, with whom I have often held sweet converse on the things of God. I perused once and a second time his epistle, understood perfectly his meaning, and was delighted with his thoughts. This was *reading*. Afterwards I reclined in my arm chair, portrayed to my imagination the well known features of his countenance, recalled the many endeared conversations we had had on the love, the grace and grandeur of the Savior, fancied to myself the life and warmth with which he was wont to expatiate on the glories of the cross, imagined him as in former days seated by my side, glowing with affection and beaming with heavenly happiness and

felt such excitement toward him of love and reciprocated friendship as made me almost ready to embrace the phantom my fancy had conjured up before me. This was *meditation*. Many a Christian neglects to meditate who conscientiously gives himself to reading. Both, however, are needful. "Reading brings the spiritual food to the palate; understanding discerns whether it be good or ill; but meditation is required to digest it and invest it with a nutritious and strengthening influence. Without it the head may be clear, but the heart is cold; the mind may be enlightened, while the affections are dull, torpid and earthly. Says the Psalmist, "While I was *musings* the fire burned." Make the trial and the result will be the same. Read and meditate on the themes con-

tained in and suggested by the Bible—the attributes of Jehovah—the advent, eventful life and tragic death of Jesus the Savior—the cross with the reasons and results of its erection—the soul with its noble capacities and endless destiny—judgment with its great white throne and convoy of angels attending Him who sitteth thereon—heaven with its white robe and conquering song—hell, with its “darkness, death, and long despair;”—pause and meditate on these things and if the fire of adoration and love do not glow and burn nothing can excite them.

DIRECTION X.

Read the Bible with *gratitude*. Why was this volume given to our world at all? Why, being revealed, have you

it in your vernacular tongue? Why are you allowed to read it when and where you like, with none "to molest or make you afraid?" Why are you permitted to form your own opinion of its contents and do or omit, as you believe that it enjoins, or forbids? With Israel of old you may say, "*Not unto us, but to Thy name be all the praise.*" To His sovereign and distinguishing goodness is all your gratitude due and to Him be it heartily given. When, in ignorance of duty you come to this divine teacher and learn what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man; when in distress you fly to this comforter and find it changing your night of weeping to a morning of joy and gladness; when weary and faint under your burden of

labor, and care, you resort to this living spring and feel your strength renewed like the eagles, when you exclaim with exultation,

“Holy Bible! book divine!
Precious treasure! thou art mine!
Mine to tell me whence I came;
Mine to teach me what I am;
Mine to chide me when I rove;
Mine to show a Savior’s love.”

Be thankful and express your gratitude to Him who has given you a counselor so wise, a comforter so sympathising, and a friend so powerful to meet all your wants. Begin that song now which will be your theme of praise forever. “I thank Thee, O most merciful One, I thank Thee for the BIBLE!”

Read the Bible then, my friend, with *faith* in its heavenly origin and unerring truth; with *prayer* for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the

Holy Spirit; with a disposition to *study* its important contents; with an examination of the preceding and subsequent *context*; with a regard to its intellectual and spiritual meaning; with *consecutiveness*; with a *personal application*, ever asking, “what does it teach *me* to believe and do;” with a retentive *memory*; with a habit of calm *meditation*; with sincere *gratitude*; and I would add, without illustration, with *reverence*, knowing that when reading the Bible you are having to do with the Holy God; with a determination to learn your duty with a view *to do it*—read the Bible thus, (and it is no impossibility I urge,) and you shall find it as the rock Horeb to the fainting Israelite—the pool of Bethesda to the victim of disease. It will be your

guide in ignorance and perplexity, your shield in the day of conflict, your solace in distress. Guided by its light as you pass through the dark valley, and encased in its panoply as you go unscathed through the dangers of the mortal conflict, its revelations of divine wisdom and mercy and power, will be themes of delightful and joyous contemplation, while

“Life or breath or being last,
Or immortality endures.”



LETTER VI.

Reading.

DEAR *Friend*

You ask my advice *in the purchase of books for your library*. This is a subject of equal importance and difficulty. Solomon has told us that, "He who walketh with wise men is wise;" a remark hardly less true, if for "wise men," we put *good books*, and for "walketh," we substitute *reads*. The adage that "a man is known by the company he keeps," is applicable alike to the volumes he peruses, as the persons with whom he associates. Go into the house of a stranger, observe the titles of the books standing on the

shelves of the library, or on the parlor table, and you pass immediate judgment upon the character of the household. I will not say that this first impression is always correct respecting all the members of the family; but it is very near the truth, as to those who had the choosing and placing of those volumes. It is an embarrassing subject, upon which to give advice in detail, as upon it perhaps no two persons will be found wholly to agree. I can hardly expect that the advice I may now give you will meet with entire approval from all whom you may consult; but as you ask my opinion—and as the subject is one of vital interest to the welfare of your mind and heart—my best thoughts upon the subject are at your disposal.

Your library has, I will suppose, several *compartments*, each containing volumes of some special character and design. I will now suggest some of the leading volumes which you will do well, so far as you can do so, to obtain.

COMPARTMENT I.

Here stands a single volume, occupying that place among your other books which the sun holds among the orbs of the sky, the HOLY BIBLE! Though but little thought of by the multitude, it is pre-eminent in its claim upon your regard, as it is unrivalled in excellence, and its benign effects upon the world. As the forms in which this book is published are various, let me suggest that the one you daily use be in all respects convenient in size and

form—and attractive in its general appearance. What is called the *Polyglott* Bible is of medium size octavo, white paper, clear type, has marginal notes, reference texts, headings to the chapters, tables of time, distance, &c., with all that is of real value in “Bagster’s Polyglott,” of London. For convenient and pleasant reading I have never met its equal. The Bible is a book to which you become strongly attached, and do not wish often to exchange. The texts you have marked on special occasions, and your various pencilings upon the margin, made during those

“ Moments in life which are never forgot,”

give to *your own dear Bible* a place in your heart which no other copy can, at least for a long time, gain. Bear this in mind in the selection you make,

and obtain a copy not to please the passing fancy, but which will probably meet your wants during years to come. I have already written at some length upon the value of the Bible, and will only add the remark of the excellent Newton: "There are *silver* books and a very few *golden* ones; but I have one book which is worth them all, called the Bible, and that is a book of BANK NOTES!" It was a resolution of the Missionary Martyn never to allow himself to peruse a book one moment after he felt it gaining a preference to the Bible. Go and do thou likewise. In your library, in your interest, and daily study, let the first place be given to that book of books—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

C O M P A R T M E N T I I .

Here may be arranged three classes of works, of a character introductory to an acquaintance with the Scriptures, considered as a volume of doctrines and duties. Of these I would name as first, after the Bible, a CONCORDANCE, or Alphabetical Index of the Scriptures. The four in common use are by Cruden, Butterworth, Brown and Clarke. As it is a volume which can never become obsolete, or hardly be supplanted by a better, I would advise you to obtain that by Rev. Alexander Cruden. Its copiousness of reference and correctness of definition far more than compensate for its greater expence. Then follows a BIBLE DICTIONARY, explanatory of persons, places and things contained in the sacred volume. The

three most commonly to be found are Kitto's Encyclopedia, (2 vols. octavo,) Robinson's Calmet, (1 vol. folio,) and Union Bible Dictionary, published by the American S. S. Union. For all ordinary purposes the last named is quite sufficient. These three are free from all denominational bias. The several branches of the church has each its own Dictionary, which can be obtained at the Depositories for such publications.

Buck's Theological Dictionary, Bickerstith's Scripture Help, and Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures, are all admirable works and are essential to the *completeness* of this part of your library.

In this connection it may not be amiss to name a few volumes in which

the Divine authenticity of the sacred volume is argued with great ability and success. This class of works is very large, and I shall mention those alone which are well adapted to the common mind and are easily procured. 'Evidences of the authenticity, inspiration and canonical authority of the Holy Scriptures,' by the late Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, is unequalled for brevity, clearness and interest. The best edition is from the Presbyterian Press, at Philadelphia, in a fifty cent volume. 'Bible Evidence for the People,' by Dr. Cumming, of London, and republished in New York, is a duodecimo of 279 pages, and is also concise and conclusive. The Am. Tract Society have published a small but admirable volume, (No. 14, of the Family

Library,) containing the works of Soame Jenyns—Leslie—Lyttleton—Bishop Watson—West, &c a cheap work, and very good. They have also issued a deeply interesting volume, from the pen of the late Dr. Nelson, entitled the ‘Cause and Cure of Infidelity,’ and another by Dr. Spring, ‘The Bible not of Man.’ To this list might be added the learned and able arguments of Paley, Erskine, Wilson, Bogue, and Macilvaine. But the few that I have named at the head of this list are sufficient for your purpose. As suggested in a former letter, keep one, at least, of these books ever at hand, to fortify yourself against the assaults of bold infidelity and wily skepticism. Be ever ready to state the reasons why you believe that the Bible is from God, and that

those books contained in the volume we adopt are alone canonical, all others being unworthy of equal respect and veneration.

COMPARTMENT III.

After a 'Concordance,' and 'Dictionary,' comes a COMMENTARY on the Bible, explanatory of each verse in consecutive order. Theological opinions modify explanation of disputed passages so much, that almost all commentaries extant are *denominational*, and therefore acceptable to those alone who sympathise with the author in his doctrine and ecclesiastical views. This renders it impossible to name the writer who will please all readers. The most complete Exposition of the Scriptures now extant is termed the COMPREHEN-

SIVE BIBLE, edited by the late Dr. Jenks of Boston, and containing most that is valuable in Scott, Henry and Doddridge, with large selections from Clark, Gill, Patrick, &c. It is contained in six quarto volumes, of 900 to 1000 pages each. Its excellence is great, and if your means will allow, you will do well to give it a place on your shelf. The 'Condensed Commentary,' by Cobbin, of London, has been republished in this country, under the title of 'Cobbin's Family Illustrated Bible,' one volume, folio. The plan is to give, in briefest terms, the opinion of each of the most learned and judicious expositors, leaving the reader to make his own selection. 'Scott's Bible,' in three volumes, is evangelical in spirit, Calvinistic in theology and eminently pious

and practical. ‘Henry’s Exposition,’ in six volumes, is exceedingly rich in thought, quaint oft times in style, deeply interesting and suggestive to an uncommon extent. ‘Clarke’s Commentary,’ in six volumes, and ‘Gill’s Commentary,’ in four volumes, are very learned, especially in Rabbinical lore, and well adapted to those who study the word of God. The former author was a Wesleyan Methodist, the latter a Baptist, as their expositions indicate.— ‘Patrick, Lowth, Whitby and Arnold’s Commentaries,’ conjoined, have been published in seven elegant volumes, as also ‘Townsend’s Notes’ on the two Testaments. Upon the New Testament alone three very able works have been published, viz: ‘Doddridge’s Family Exposition,’ one volume, quarto,

‘Burkitt’s Notes,’ in two volumes, folio, and ‘Barnes’ Notes,’ in twelve duodecimo volumes. Doctors Hodge, Chalmers, Stuart and Mr. Haldane, upon the Romans—Leighton, on St. Peter, and Stuart, on the Revelation, ought to be mentioned.

To sum up what has been said; in the order of relative importance, I would arrange the most desirable commentaries thus :

Comprehensive,

Cobbin’s Condensed Commentary,

Doddridge on the New Testament,

Barnes’ Notes, “ “

Hodge on the Epistle to the Romans,

Edwards’ Family Testament by the

Am. Tr. Society.

Others may be added, as your pecu-

niary means may allow, or as you may wish to learn the views of those with whom you sympathise in theological sentiment, church government and discipline. But I would urge that if possible you obtain one of these Expositions, for without it many parts of the Bible will remain obscure, which you would do well to understand.

COMPARTMENT IV.

Having satisfied yourself that the Bible is heaven-descended, having taken a general survey of its contents, you are now to ascertain with more particularity what that book teaches us that “man is to *believe concerning God*, and what *duty* God requires of man.” Unless the volume be profitable to you in these ways, it has done you comparatively

little good. You should have at hand a few volumes upon the *doctrines* and *duties* taught in the sacred volume, with their exemplification in the life and death of eminent saints, ancient and modern.

In respect to religious *opinions*, the Church is divided into two general classes, styled *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, from the two divines who classified these forms of belief. The differences between them mainly respect the extent of the Divine fore-knowledge, election, and perseverance of the saints. The selection of theological works for your library will be affected by your sympathy with one or other of these systems. Are you a *Calvinist*? You will find the doctrines of your choice ably defended in 'Calvin's Institutes,'

2 vols., folio, published by the Presbyterian Board, or in Dr. Dwight's 'System of Theology,' 4 vols., folio, or in a small volume by Dr. Hopkins of Auburn, entitled 'The Christian's Instructor,' 1 vol., duodecimo, or in 'Fuller's Works,' 2 vols., folio. Are you *Arminian*, (Methodist,) then the works of Wesley and Watson will be to your liking. Without specifying farther, I have but to repeat what was said in a former letter—know what you believe respecting the character and government of God, the design and destiny of creation, and why you believe thus. To this extent you may and ought to be a theologian.

Volumes upon the practical obligations of revealed religion are abundant and admirable. Without pretending

to completeness I append herewith a list of those upon which the wise and good have put the seal of their commendation, and which you cannot read without decided benefit:

‘Baxter’s Saints’ Rest.’

‘Doddridge’s Rise and Progress,’ &c.

‘Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress.’

‘Edwards on the Affections.’

‘Flavel on Keeping the Heart.’

‘Way of Life,’ by Dr. Hodge.

‘Religious Experience,’ by Dr. Alexander.

Hamilton’s ‘Life of Lady Colquhoun.’

“ ‘Life in Earnest.’

“ ‘Mount of Olives.’

‘Alcott’s Fireside Lectures.’

‘Hervey’s Meditations.’

‘Hannah More’s Practical Piety.’

‘Advice to a Young Christian.’

‘Clarke on the Promises.’

‘Hugh White’s Meditations.’

Spring’s ‘Obligations of the World,’ &c.

“ ‘Attractions of the Cross.’

Bogatsky’s ‘Golden Treasury.’

Dick’s ‘Philosophy of Religion.’

Jay’s ‘Morning and Evening Exercises.’

By the side of these volumes let there stand MEMOIRS of departed saints; as Brainerd—Payson—Fletcher—Martyn—Boardman—Page—Mrs. Eliz. Fry—Mrs. Ann H. Judson—Mrs. Graham—Mrs. Huntington—Mrs. S. L. Smith—Mrs. Winslow—Miss Linnard—Miss Lundie Duncan—and others, who exemplified the holiness, benignity and power of religion, in sanctified affections—useful lives—and triumphant deaths.

COMPARTMENT V.

Having furnished the religious portions of your library your attention is next directed to works which pertain more to the intellect and taste than to the heart. In becoming a Christian you are not required to sacrifice your natural attachment to science and literature. These may and ought to have a place in your interest and study. As to the *sciences*, I would suggest that a compendious and accurate work, like Olmstead's or Lardner's Natural Philosophy, is desirable and ought to be near at hand. Two of the most instructive and eloquent works on Astronomy are Mitchell's "Planetary and Stellar Worlds." and Dr. Chalmer's "Astronomical Sermons." As containing a large amount of valuable knowledge I would

recommend Brewer's 'Science of Things Familiar,' and 'Chambers' Miscellany,' in ten volumes. The Am. S. S. Union have published several works upon ancient and modern history, physiology, &c., which are accurate and comprehensive. In the purchase of books upon these subjects look well to the author. Is he reliable as authority? Is he a Christian and will not distort events, (as Gibbon has done,) to make them tell against Christianity? Is his treatise complete? As your works upon these topics must be comparatively few let them be selected with great judgment and care.

As to POETRY, there are a few authors whose works you should possess and read often and attentively. At the head of the list stands Cowper,

of whose delightful pages you cannot commit too many to memory. Then follows James Montgomery, who is more exclusively the poet of devotion than even the bard of Olney. There is a freshness and a vivacity in his writings which render them very attractive to the most careless reader. Such pieces as 'The Grave,' 'The Common Lot,' 'The Stranger and his Friend,' will never die. 'Paradise Lost,' 'Young's Night Thoughts,' and 'The Course of Time,' are above praise. These writers were scrupulous in the morality of their composition, so that no exception can be taken to the matter and influence of their admirable poems.

As to 'Shakspeare's Plays,' while I cannot advise you to remain in utter ignorance respecting them, I dare not

advise you to expend much time in their perusal. Byron, with the exception of a few pieces, should be eschewed altogether. He had a brilliant genius, but a bad heart, and one page of Cowper will do you more good than fifty pages of this dark misanthrope. 'Thompson's Seasons,' is a classic, and as such is worthy of a place on your shelf; though it is not quite true of him that he wrote not a line which "dying he might wish to blot." Scott may be read with much interest, and no harm—so Crabbe—Southey—Rogers—Bloomfield—Wordsworth—Campbell—Hunt—Crolly—Barret—Tennyson—Heber—Barton—White, and Hemans.

As to Burns and Moore, with many beauties, they have so much to deform that I cannot recommend too great fa-

miliarity with them. Shelly avoid altogether. In the purchase of poetical as well as literary works of other kinds, seek for authors who have baptised their genius in the Christian fountain. Look to moral improvement as well as momentary gratification of a taste for the melody of rhyme. American authors have written much in prose and poetry of great beauty and of a healthful religious influence. Poems by Bryant—Wilcox—Sigourney—Gould, &c., are worthy of a place in your library.

“And how about *novels*, may I read them?” To reject a volume merely because the incidents it contains never formed part of real life or at least never under the circumstances there recorded is to advance a position quite untenable. It would be to repudiate many most in-

structive parts of the New Testament Scriptures, and of human productions such volumes as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Father Clement and Johnson's Rasselas. But justifying the reading of these volumes must not be understood as approving and commending all fictitious works. Very far from it! That admirable writer, John Foster, has a remark upon this subject to which I fully assent. He says, "Viewing the vast rout of novels as they are, I think they do incalculable mischief. I wish we could collect them all together and make one vast fire of them; I should exult to see the smoke of them ascend like that of Sodom and Gomorrah; the judgment would be as just." Keep your hands off from the various productions of Marryat, Bulwer, Ainsworth,

Eugene Sue, and shall I add *Dickens*? I know his great genius and apparent sympathy with degradation and distress, and would commend him for the same. But there is too much profanity, too many convivial scenes, too frequent slurs at evangelical religion, to make his works fit for young Christians. And how of Walter Scott? It will be difficult to avoid reading some of his works. But remember that he did not sympathize with the pious of his land in their warfare against their enemies, and hence, Claverhouse seems more like the injured than the man of blood. Scott is a *wizard* in his power to interest and fascinate. It is always bad to part with your liberty and you do it while within the magic circle of his genius. James is unexceptionable as a moralist, but writes too much to write well.

As a general rule, beware then of fictitious works. Cultivate a taste for the truthful in history, travels, biography and discoveries, where you know that things are as you read.

To sum up my suggestions in a few paragraphs:

1. Let your Library contain, if possible, at least one volume, illustrating the Bible—general science—ancient and modern literature—the geography and history of your own country and other lands—with a narrative of Christian missions to the heathen.

2. Before making a purchase consult some judicious friend—see who is the author, and be sure that he has an established reputation for ability and disposition to state the whole truth.

3. Examine attentively the Preface

that you may be sure it is the work you need.

4. When you obtain a book make it your immediate business to read it through and understand its contents. Even though you have the ability, it is not well to fill your shelves with works you never look into.

5. As a general rule read your own books before you borrow others.

6. Read with pencil in hand, noting upon the margin or fly-leaf those special passages which you would re-peruse and remember.

7. If in circumstances at all consistent for doing so, converse with a friend respecting what you read. You are not sure that a fact is in your memory until you are able to communicate that fact to another person.

8. Read with a view to improvement of mind and heart, and not mere gratification or to "kill time."

9. Reflect upon what you read. That is not worth your perusal which is not worthy of subsequent thought and meditation.

10. Avoid all books which are decidedly anti-religious; all which aim at novelty and startling assertions, rather than plain, honest truth; all which are spiced with descriptions of scenes and conversations which you would not like to see and hear; all which tend to shake your belief in the authenticity of the Bible and its obvious teachings;—all from which you do not rise a wiser person.



LETTER VII.

A day well spent.

DEAR *Linda* -

A leading element of that remorse which darkens the last hours of many a human being is a recollection of wasted or mis-spent time. The dying Altamont upon hearing the clock strike twelve, exclaimed, ' O, time, time! It is fit thou shouldst strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled forever!' Many, alas! are the lips which have uttered like expressions of futile and remorseful regret futile, for time once gone can never be recalled remorseful, for there is no necessity laid upon

any human being so to live as to be compelled to depart from earth with such expressions of deep and agonizing sorrow. If time be not well spent the fault is their's to whom the boon is given, and they alone must meet the consequences.

I do not doubt that it is your honest and earnest desire to be able to say when leaving the world: 'I have endeavored to pass my mortal life in a manner consistent with His will who gave it me.' The object of this letter is to aid you in attaining this important result.

Time, like wealth, is made up of large portions subdivided to minutest fragments. As the less unite in forming the larger, so they are to be specially looked after and guarded. In

imitation of Franklin, it may be said, "Look after the *days*, and the weeks, months and years will look after themselves." I have selected a DAY, because the smallest division of time respecting which we take any special and distinct recognition.

As to the hour of rising in the morning, that must depend upon the time you retire to rest, and your honest experience of what is most conducive to bodily health and mental vigor. The counsel of childhood holds during adult life:

"Early to bed.
And early to rise."

But few persons can maintain a "sound mind in a sound body," with less than seven hours' sleep. My own habit is to retire at ten and rise at five, and if I abridge this amount of repose

a debt at once accumulates which must thereafter be liquidated. Too much cannot be said or written in favor of *early rising*. It is essential to the complete realization of all the results for which you are placed on earth. I would commend to your attention the physiological fact, that so far as rest to the system is concerned, one hour before midnight is more valuable than two after. Without detaining you with argument and illustration upon a topic so trite as this, I will subjoin a few sentences from a letter of our recently deceased statesman, the Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER:

RICHMOND. April 29, 1847, 5 A. M.

Whether it be a favor or an annoyance, you owe this letter to my habits of early rising. From the hour marked

at the top of the page, you will naturally conclude that my comrades are not now engaging my attention as we have not calculated on being early travelers to-day.

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It is morning, and a morning sweet, and fresh, and delightful. Every body knows the morning in its metaphorical sense, applied to so many objects and on so many occasions. The health, strength and beauty of early years lead us to call that period the "morning of life." Of a lovely young woman, we say she is "bright as the morning," and no one doubts why Lucifer is called the "son of the morning."

But the morning itself few people know any thing about. With them morning is not a new issuing of light, a new bursting forth of the sun, a new

waking up of all that has life from a sort of temporary death, to behold again the work of God, the heavens and the earth; it is only part of the domestic day, belonging to breakfast, to reading the newspapers, answering notes, sending the children to school, and giving orders for dinner.

The first streak of light, the earliest purpling of the east which the lark springs up to greet, and the deep coloring into orange and red, till at length the "glorious sun is seen, regent of day," this they never enjoy, for they never see it.

Beautiful descriptions of the morning abound in all languages, but they are the strongest, perhaps, in those of the East, where the sun is often an object of worship.

King David speaks of taking to himself the "wings of the morning." This is highly poetical and beautiful. The wings of the morning are the beams of the rising sun. Rays of light are wings. It is thus said that the sun of righteousness shall arise "with healing in his wings"—a rising sun which shall scatter life, *health* and joy throughout the universe.

Milton has fine descriptions of morning, but not so many as Shakspeare, from whose writings pages of the most beautiful imagery, all founded on the glory of the morning, might be filled.

The manifestation of the power of God, like His mercies, are "new every *morning*," and fresh every moment.

We see as fine risings of the sun as ever Adam saw, and its risings are as

much a miracle now as they were in his day, and I think a good deal more, because, it is now a part of the miracle that for thousands and thousands of years he has come to his appointed time without the variation of a millionth part of a second.

Adam could not tell how this might be. I know the morning—I am acquainted with it, and I love it. I love it, fresh and sweet as it is—a daily new creation, breaking forth and calling all that have life and breath and being to new adoration, new employments, and new gratitude.”

Rising at early dawn, the first question that arrests your wakeful attention is this, “how am I to spend the day?” It will be well if this question was examined and answered on the evening

previous. Each day should close with a *retrospect* and an *anticipation*:—What have I done to-day? what shall I probably be called upon to do to-morrow? may well employ a portion of time ere retiring to repose. You will awake with more readiness and more cheerfully leave your pleasant couch if you have something in prospect, than if the future is a blank yet to be filled.

Respecting the engagements of a day, I have recently met with a brief sketch, original, suggestive, and pertinent, which I will introduce in this connection. It is entitled

THE DAY'S THREE RULES.

The Duty, the Burden and the Lesson.

An old man called to him his son and pupil one morning, and said to him,

“Theodore, have you prepared your mind for the *three things*?”

“What three things, father?”

“The three claims of the day, my son, concerning which I instructed you. We should enter on no day of life without carefully inquiring what is before us, and what is expected of us.”

“Now I remember,” said Theodore: “they are the three rules which you desired me to say once to myself every morning on rising.”

“What are these rules?”

“They are these,” replied Theodore:

“First, *Do the duty of the day*;

Secondly, *Bear the burden of the day*;

Thirdly, *Learn the lesson of the day*.”

“Yes, my child, and there is no day

to which these do not apply. Each has its duty, its burden, and its lesson. Something has to be *done*, something to be *borne*, and something to be *learned*, and he who neglects no one of these three things, spends his days aright. Endeavor to apply these rules to some one day, which is fresh in your remembrance, as for example, yesterday."

"I will do so," said Theodore. "The *duty* of yesterday was that of making a catalogue of your books and engrossing it in a volume. This, I mean was my grand business. There were many lesser duties, arising from my circumstances. The *burden* of the day was a heavy one, but I am afraid to name it lest you laugh at me."

"Out with it."

"It was a mortification of my vanity

at the rejection of my verses sent to the newspaper."

"Ah! I can believe it; mortification of pride and vanity is among our heaviest burdens."

"The *lesson* of the day," continued Theodore, "was taught me by a lamb in the meadow, which suffered itself to be rudely pushed about by my dog, without the least sign of resentment, and thereby soon forgot the injury and healed the wound."

"I perceive," said the old man, "that you have observed my precept, in recalling to your memory these three things on closing your eyes for sleep. But suppose you go further, and endeavor to apply them to the future. We have but just begun a new day; how do these rules apply to what it is likely to bring you?"

Theodore paused a little and then replied: "The *duty* of the day is to go on in my studies, especially to perfect myself in what remains of geometry. The *burden* of the day, is in great part unknown to me. I can, however, foresee something of it in these severe studies, added to the knowledge that my companions will be keeping it as a holiday. The *lesson* of the day, so far as not included in the geometry aforesaid, cannot be foreseen. But I shall be more on the watch for it, in consequence of your reminding."

"My son," said the old man, "it is impossible for me to tell you the advantage I have derived from the habit of looking forward every morning, and backward every evening, upon the passing day, with these little words on my mind:

THE DUTY—THE BURDEN—THE LESSON."

Let me illustrate this subject a little farther. You sustain the following distinct relations, each having claims upon a portion of your daily thoughts and endeavors. These relations are to *God*—your *self*—your *kinspeople*—your *church*—your *community*—your *country*—and the *world*.

The *first* of these relations suggests such obligations as these: "Fear God and keep His commandments." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

As to *yourself*, no day should pass without conscious improvement in mental and moral character. Some contri-

bution to your store of intellectual acquirements, some addition to your pious emotions and principles should characterize each period of your waking hours. "To grow in grace and knowledge" is a duty you owe to your own soul and next to your God should receive assiduous attention.

The claims of *home and kindred* are to be met in the forms of reverence and dutifulness to parents, and habitual kindness, generosity and self-sacrifice toward all within the domestic circle varying in degree and expression with the relative position sustained. "Be kind to the loved ones at home."

If a *member of the church*, you sustain a relation to fellow disciples which originate obligations of an important and urgent nature. To respect the feelings,

to regard the character, to promote the happiness and in all ways to advance the well being and well doing of those who are one with you in the faith and hope of christianity is no less a duty than to honor, love, and glorify God Himself the parent of that household of which you are common members, and the founder of that religion of which you are common disciples and heirs.

As a *member of society*, you are under important obligations to your neighbors and fellow-citizens. At the head of this list stands the apostolic injunction, "BE COURTEOUS." Much is said in favor of being genteel, but not too much if the term be used in its original sense. Genteel and gentle are synonyms and no person can be truly a gentleman whose manners are not of that

respectful, quiet character, which has its origin in a heart that cherishes feelings of universal kindness and benevolence. Dr. Hawes, of Hartford, truly says, that "the young person is not far from ruin who can say, without blushing, I care not what others think of me." It is the case that some persons are respected and honored, notwithstanding an exceeding repulsiveness of manner. Their eminent talents or exalted station have secured this public esteem, but it has been in spite of these obstacles and not by their assistance.

Your *country* has claims upon you which patriotism and piety unite in requiring you faithfully to meet. The "lines have fallen to you in pleasant places," and not a day should pass without a distinct and grateful recognition

of this fact at the throne of the Most High. With gratitude for the past and present, let there be added prayer for the future. The Jews were once the favored nation, but they have lost their proud eminence, and how? through the sins of rulers and people! We are bid to "rejoice with trembling," lest our's be a similar doom. With the continuance of our civil and religious privileges your happiness is intimately entwined. The Israelite "wept when he remembered Zion," and so will you if ever called to view the fragments of a once glorious union—the ruins of our cherished temple of liberty. Avoid whatever tends to provoke the divine indignation and invite the vengeance of Almighty God. Pray for "all who are in authority," that in their deliberations,

patriotism may prevail over selfishness and godliness over indifference to the will and glory of Jehovah. Ours is a beautiful inheritance, be it your daily and earnest prayer that this land never be trod by the foot of the usurper and we be numbered among the republics which *were* but *are not*.

And lastly, the *world* has claims upon your interest, sympathy and prayerful endeavor. Said Sam. J. Mills, "Brother, we must not die before we make our influence felt to the remotest limits of our earth." Nor did he, and may I add, *nor need you*. Do you ask *how*? Begin with resolving that you will make the wants of mankind your habitual study. Read and hear as you have opportunity, and at once will you begin to *pray* and with prayer you will begin

to devise and act. The labor of your hands will furnish you with gifts for those who are toiling in the distant fields "faint yet pursuing." Determine to be useful and you can and will be.

Scarcely a day passes in which obligations in one or all of these connections do not call for your practical attention. The field is large, but you are ever treading some portion and leaving proof of your presence in results happy or injurious to yourself and others.

In respect to acts of benevolence, which in forms immediate or remote, should constitute the great business of life, let me urge upon you the importance of being content with doing *little at a time*. World-renowed philanthropists and far-famed deeds of beneficence must of necessity be the exceptions,

while the general rule is that of always doing some good though the amount be small at a time. Said the excellent John Newton, "If when going through the street I meet a lad who is weeping bitterly because he has lost a penny and I dry up his tears by giving him another, I feel that I have done something. I might be gratified at doing more, but this trifling act is better than doing nothing at all." The same worthy man once said, "I look upon the world as containing two heaps; one of *misery* and the other of *happiness*. I would make it my business each day to do something to *diminish the one* and *increase the other*." Dr. Chalmers says with great beauty, "Little things and little people have brought great things to pass. The large world

in which we exist is made up of little particles, small as the sands on the sea shore. The vast sea is composed of small drops of water. The little busy bees, how much honey they gather. A little star shines brightly in the sky in a dark night and may be the means of saving many a poor sailor from shipwreck, and *a little Christian may do a great deal of good if he or she will try.* There is nothing like TRYING." That is a small tract you have in your hand—only four pages. It takes but little time to give it to a neighbor and say "Do read this, won't you?" But that small act has done what ten most eloquent sermons could not effect, it has made that neighbor a Christian.

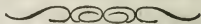
It takes but a moment to stop that poor woman and ask her if all are well

at home, but Oh ! the solace to her sorrowing heart. She thought that all had forgotten her ; she now feels that she has a friend. *Do good daily*, and that in ways limited and obscure if large opportunities do not present themselves.

“ That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives,
Whom none can love, and none can thank,
Creation's blot—creation's blank.”

This letter will be closed with the description of a plan which the author has long adopted and found greatly useful in enabling him to spend his time to some definite and, as he would hope, useful purpose. It is this, obtain a blank book of small octavo size, containing about 54 pages, of ruled paper. If you have no writing desk at hand attach a pencil to it and let it

lie upon your table near your Bible. Early on Monday morning note upon the successive lines of a page the pursuits which, so far as you can anticipate, will call for your attention during the week. On each morning before going from your room, look at this book—cross out what was attended to on the previous day—add any item that requires attention, and on the next Monday morning examine the list. If any matters have been omitted, either assign the reason under the head of “Remarks,” or carry them forward to the next week. If room remains at the bottom of the page, note down any events of interest, personal, domestic, or public, that have occurred during the week. Here is a specimen :



REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN JAN. AND JAN., 1853.

	REMARKS.
1. Retire at 10 and rise at 5½.	Quite punctual.
2. Omit not secret devotions.	Twice too formal.
3. Monthly concert.	Went, Gave —
4. Weekly prayer and conference meeting.	Was present.
5. Write to —, and —, and —.	Sent No. 1 and 3.
6. Converse daily, with some one, upon religion.	Omitted twice.
7. Read five pages daily in —.	Omitted once.
8. Meeting of — Com., on Friday P. M.	Attended.
9. Go and see old Mrs. —, who is very ill.	Saw her.
10. Sabbath duties.	All attended to.

GENERAL OCCURRENCES.

Mr. C—— called and spent ——— night.
 Weather beautiful, except Tuesday.

Mr. ——— was buried on Tuesday P. M.

Mr. ——— and Miss ——— married on Friday evening.

It would be wrong to close this letter without referring to the subject of PRAYER TO GOD. Whatever duties you forget or neglect, omit not to pray. The life of your soul depends upon the regard you give to this exercise. Besides maintaining at all times and in all places a devotional frame of mind, have stated seasons when praise, thanksgiving and supplication occupy your whole attention poured forth while "in your closet" to Him who has said, "Ask and ye shall receive."

Bishop Kenn's morning and evening hymns embody a large amount of thought appropriate to the season of rising and retiring—and next to the Bible I know of no sentences more worthy to be committed to memory and recited at the dawn or close of the day.

Here are three stanzas from each.

MORNING.

“Awake, my soul, and with the sun,
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth and early rise,
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to Thee renew,
Scatter my sins like morning dew,
Guard my first springs of thought and will
And with Thyself my spirit fill.

Direct—control—suggest this day
All I design—or do—or say,
That all my powers, with all their might
In Thy sole glory may unite.”

EVENING.

“Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light ;
Keep me, O, keep me, King of kings,
Beneath thine own Almighty wings.

Forgive me. Lord, for thy dear Son,
The ills that I this day have done,
That with the world, myself and Thee,
I ere I sleep, at peace may be.

Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed,
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious, at the judgment day.”

LETTER VIII.

Conduct before the World.

DEAR *Asinoda*

The Apostle PAUL tells his Christian friends at Corinth, that they are "Epistles, known and read of all." The same is true of the followers of Christ in every age and clime. You are such an epistle, seen and read by those with whom you habitually associate. You are Christianity embodied in their sight, a visible manifestation of the faith which you have espoused and the principles you have confessed. Recognising this fact and appreciating the solemnity of your position, you ask with becoming earnestness, *How must*

I deport myself when among those who are not the avowed disciples of Christ?

A few HINTS is all the reply which can at present be returned to this very important question.

Sympathize with your associates in their pursuits, so far as consistent with your religious principles. Do not frown upon any proposal or discard any contemplated enterprise merely because of the source from which it emanates. It is written of one of the English sovereigns that

“He never said a foolish thing,
And never did a wise one.”

A person may have a very bad heart, lead a sadly immoral life, and yet may suggest many excellent and useful thoughts. Be willing to allow what is

commendable, and second enterprises which promise salutary results be the originator who he may. Leave the world only so far as your principles require the surrender. Upon this point I refer you to Letter 2d, as suggesting the circumstances under which you and your worldly companions must part company.

Be cheerful in their presence. They believe that to be religious is to be gloomy and sad, heart and head bowed under an almost intolerable weight of commands, rites and ceremonies. It is for you to convince them by your conduct that religion is no enemy to rational and healthful enjoyment, but is at war with those gratifications alone which, with a momentary degree of pleasure, do in the end "bite like the

serpent and sting like the adder." You know by experience, that "great peace have they who keep God's law," and that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness," and that "joy is comely to the upright." Reflection and prayer will enable you to distinguish between cheerfulness and levity. The latter most carefully avoid and shun, the former habitually cultivate and exhibit.

"You are marching through Immanuel's land,
To fairer worlds on high."

Both *be* and *appear* a cheerful and happy Christian.

Be serious. This is not at all incompatible with habitual cheerfulness. A boisterous Christian—a loud talking, loud laughing and forward disciple of the "meek and lowly Jesus," are anomalies which the Bible no where recognises. A mild and chastened style

of conduct and voice, sobriety of mind and deportment, a manner indicating thoughtfulness of heavenly themes, this approaches much nearer the standard which you should try to attain. It is in no instance recorded of our Lord that He smiled. Without considering this as proof that He was always sad and weeping, it suggests the admitted fact, that His habit of soul was seriousness.

When in company, if you see and hear that which is decidedly wrong, it is for you either to administer *rebuke*, kindly yet decidedly, not fearing the smile of derision and frown of displeasure, or *quietly to leave* the place where such conduct is allowed, or, if neither is practicable, carefully to withhold whatever may seem like approval. That

“wisdom which cometh from above,” given to those who habitually ask it, will suggest the course of duty on such occasions. For your encouragement let me say that in proportion to the consistency and kindliness of your general deportment will be the fewness of manifest attacks upon your principles or designed efforts to wound your feelings. An exemplary course of conduct is often found to secure respect, even from the most godless in community.

When in company never forget the important fact that the eyes of many are upon you. Your words are heard, your actions scanned, and your very countenance is watched. You may wish it were otherwise, but it is so and you are left to the alternative of becoming a recluse, or be very circum-

spect in your deportment. You are "in the world," to take your place in society with its duties and temptations. It is not for you to fly from the field, but to stand firm at your post and quit yourself in a manner alike honorable to the faith you have espoused and needful to your successful well doing. Let your associates, gazing with what intentness they may, see in you a faithful representation of that religion which came from heaven to regenerate and save the world. In one respect be upon your *special* watch at all times, and particularly when in general society, and that is *in conversation*. A proper government of the tongue is at once so needful and difficult that the apostle styles the one who has secured this triumph a "perfect man." He has con-

quered what may be and often is a most dangerous enemy, and secured a most efficient ally. Discard from your creed the too prevalent sentiment that it is as well to speak it as to think it. It is a false position, not for a moment tenable. So long as you keep your opinion of a person or a measure secreted in your own bosom you exert no influence for or against the object of your like or dislike. Far different is the case the moment you speak out that opinion. As so much of ordinary conversation turns upon persons, their character and conduct, be very watchful lest you render yourself amenable to the crime of bearing false witness against your neighbor. It is a safe rule to be silent if you can say nothing favorable; unless the refutation of error, the illustration

of truth, and the destruction of a harmful agency, demand a bold utterance of what you know or believe. At all times keep within, rather than exceed the truth. Better utter a sentence too little, than a word too much. In respect to animadversion upon the character of your associates and neighbors, as upon all other topics, there cannot be too strict a regard to the "Golden Rule," (golden, because of its excellence and rarity,) "As you would that men should do to you do you also to them likewise." A proper respect to this heaven-descended and admirable maxim would do away with a large proportion of the social ills with which humanity is now afflicted.

Let it not suffice you that you are doing no harm by your words and con-

duct. It is almost as wrong to be a mere negation as to be an agent of positive and overt evil. You are placed in society, not to be a mere cypher—nor to stand, like the barren and profitless fig tree; but rather, to be useful to Him who placed you here, and to those by whom you are surrounded. From the characteristic attributes of the Most High—from the habitual conduct of our Lord while on earth—from every page of the Bible, there may be heard this earnest command: “DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN AS YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY.” And what kind of good? Before all others, to the SOUL. “The soul of true charity is charity to the soul,” is an important truth though quaintly said. And a “word spoken in due season, how good

it is"—how many souls that word, uttered at the right time and manner, has saved from woe and raised to the heavenly glory and blessedness! You have secured the confidence and affection of a friend. Employ this instrumentality in gaining for the claims of Christ and the soul an entrance to the mind and conscience of that person. When in the circle of a company of ungodly persons you are as a lamp in the midst of darkness. Forget not the importance of your position and neglect not the privilege it offers of doing good. And oh! if by any means you save a soul from death what joy will that successful endeavor eternally awaken. That redeemed sinner will be your joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of Judgment and throughout the

immortality which stretches beyond the limits of the brief and limited space of time. Said the excellent John Urquhart, "There is such a thing as being saved yet so as by fire; such a thing as being least in the kingdom of heaven. Even this is a thought of highest ecstasy, but there is a thought more ecstatic still. It is the thought of an abundant entrance, and an exceeding great reward and a crown of glory which fadeth not away and a splendor like the shining of the sun in the firmament. Yes, to emit the faintest ray from the dazzling crown which shall ever encircle the head of the Savior, is a thought far too glorious for human conception; but there is a thought more glorious still,—to blaze forth the central gem of one of those brilliant

clusters—to add to the glory of the Redeemer's diadem, and yet have around us a coronet of our own."

And O! as you "range the sweet fields, on the banks of the river," how blissful to meet some relative or friend, who has been brought to that world "all bright and glorious," through your example and efforts, and how ardent the gratitude and joy with which, with united heart and voice, you will "sing of Salvation for ever and ever."

And now—Dear *Anna*: "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified."

Yours with all truth and affection.

F. de la Harpe

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